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The return to God

THE RETURN TO GOD

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THE RETURN TO GOD

READINGS FOR LENT MEDITATION

BY

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FOREWORD

THE keynote of Lent, the end we are to set before us, the spirit in which we are to enter upon it, are proclaimed in the Liturgical Offices of Ash Wednesday. Through the lips of her children Holy Church cries: *Turn thee unto us, O Lord, according unto the multitude of thy mercies, look upon the frailty of our nature,* upon us who are but dust and ashes, *who have sinned against thee,* who yet *hatest nothing that thou hast made,* and *dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent.* To whom the instant Voice of the Divine Mercy, who indeed has inspired our cry, responds: *Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments;* that thy return be known unto thy Father *which seeth in secret, with all your heart,* your innermost and entire being, *for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

The purpose of the following meditations is to aid souls in this return to God himself. Too often our spiritual life is dissipated on trifles, means being mistaken for the end, devotions for devotion, sensible consolation for the soul's union with God. The building lacks foundation, unity, design, purpose, solidity, stability; the characteristic Christian virtues, humility, abnegation, faith, hope, charity, patience, confidence in God, are strangely wanting. And this is largely due to the fact that souls seek rest and satisfaction in the things of God rather than in God himself, their Sole Rest, Satisfaction, and Blessedness. For, as St. Augustine says: *He who prefers that which he receives to him from whom he receives it esteems the gift more than the Giver. Hath God, then, no reward? None, save himself. Thou, O God, art my exceeding great reward.*

The desire for God is love for God, the seeking after God is his will for us in this life and *pleaseth God full greatly,* as Dame Julian says, for by this seeking do we come to that knowledge which is eternal life. Knowledge, which is fruit more of prayer than of study, of those moments when

> " Rapt in oblivion, the soul
> Doth, in a single moment, learn
> More than the busy brain and sense,
> With all their toil, could ever learn.
> Mirrored within its God, it views
> Today, tomorrow and the past,
> And faith sees here in time the things
> That through eternity shall last."

To this end may the Divine Wisdom, who alone *guideth the just in right paths, sheweth him the Kingdom of God and giveth him knowledge of holy things,* lead each reader of this book.

BEDE FROST, O.S.B.

Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

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PART I

THE CONDITIONS OF OUR RETURN

ASH WEDNESDAY

Christian doctrine, which is the Revealed Truth made by God to man through Jesus Christ, whether found in the teaching of Holy Church, in Holy Scripture, or in tradition, is *chiefly concerned with God, whose handiwork is especially man* (Summa Theol., I. iv.), whom he has created *to be immortal and made an image of his own eternity* (Wisd. ii. 23), to *be to the praise of his glory* (Eph. i. 12). Thus *it is more concerned with Divine Things than with human acts; though it does treat of the latter, inasmuch as man is ordained by them to the perfect knowledge of God in whom consists eternal bliss* (Summa Theol., I. iv.).

It has, together with all Christian practice, but one end, to bring man into union with God, his First Beginning and his Last End, to reveal God, to create and foster desire for God, to enable man to seek, find, possess, and enjoy God, who is his sole Happiness, Satisfaction, and Beatitude.

Man naturally desires and seeks after happiness, such a fulness and perfection of life as shall satisfy every element of his complex being. He is persuaded as by an inextinguishable conviction that such a completion of his being is to be found. No less is he compelled to acknowledge that all his search for it amongst created things is a failure.

Ever he retraces his steps in disappointment at the futility of trying to satisfy such deep needs as his at the fount of creatures less indeed than himself. The things he makes his gods mock him by their impotence or destroy him in his folly. He sees himself a capacity which nothing of time and space can fill, a question without an answer, a lock without a key, a problem lacking a solution.

Now, either all this—his thirst for fulness of life and the failure of any created thing to satisfy it—means that the universe is a bad joke (which would certainly not appear from naturalism, which is particularly devoid of humour) or a meaningless tragedy devoid of purpose or end (and tragedy is never merely that), or it means that such a fulness of life is to be found outside the material universe, in someone who is greater and other than man; in a word, God. Man is a capacity, an emptiness created *to be filled with all the fulness of God* (Eph. iii. 19). The most profound characteristic of his being is that he is capable of desiring, knowing, and receiving God. *The glory of God is the living man; the life of man is the vision of God* (St. Irenæus). The perfection of each creature is only to be found in attaining its end, the purpose for which it was created. Man's end is God himself, Supreme and Perfect Good, Infinite and Eternal Truth, Full and Unending Life, *for whose pleasure all things are and were created* (Rev. iv. 11), and in the knowledge, possession, and enjoyment of whom consists the true and eternal life of man, for *the happy life consists of joy in the Truth, for this is a joying in thee, who art the Truth, O God, health of my countenance, my God* (St. Aug.).

FIRST THURSDAY IN LENT

The end of man is union with God by charity, the perfection of which is the result of the Sight of God in heaven. *Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is* (1 St. John iii. 2). So St. Augustine says: *The contemplation of God is promised to us as being the goal of all our actions and the everlasting perfection of our joys* (St. Aug., De Trin. 1-17) . . . *it is for the hope of the eternal contemplation of God that everyone is converted, and undergoes the process of repentance and purification from sin* (St. Aug., C. Faust xxii. 52). No one, he goes on to say, loves the labour of the Christian life for its own sake, but for its Eternal Reward, God himself.

Compared with other ages, there seems to be but little thought and said about heaven in our time. There is, indeed, an insistence upon virtue for its own sake and a feeling that the future life is so obscure and unknown that it is useless to spend time in dwelling on it. This comes largely from forgetfulness of the fact that what constitutes the reality, peace, and joy of heaven is not what are known as its "accidental joys"—the absence of sin, temptation, suffering, and the like—but the known, seen, loved, and enjoyed Presence of God. The blessedness of heaven does not lie in this or that, but wholly in the soul's contemplation of and rest in

God, its Eternal Home. *When I awake up after thy likeness I shall be satisfied with it, for in thy presence is fulness of joy* (Ps. xvii. 15). Eternal life, our Lord tells us, is the knowledge of the one true God—knowledge, that is, personal, intimate, perfect, and so a possession and an enjoyment of the One loved. The beginning of this knowledge is the work of this life. *Man was created to know God, to know thee is perfect righteousness* (Wisd. xv. 3), says the wise man; and St. John: *We know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true . . . this is the true God and eternal life* (1 St. John v. 20). Moreover, our Lord has summed up all the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount in a call to perfection—*Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect* (St. Matt. v. 48)—which implies that we can and must know in what that perfection consists. It is true that we cannot know the all of God, since the finite creature is unable to comprehend and entirely grasp the Infinite Creator, but we can gain a sufficient knowledge of God, a knowledge which will enable us to love and serve him here and to find our happiness in him hereafter. Each Christian, then, according to his capacity and circumstances—for *God provides for everything according to the capacity of its nature* (Summa Theol., I. ix.)—is bound to seek after the saving knowledge of God. For the first commandment is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart* (St. Matt. xxii. 37), and we can only love that of which we have some knowledge. He is bound to set his feet on the way which leads to the perfection of contemplation which shall be his in heaven, and which on earth consists, as St. Gregory says, *in clinging with one's whole mind to the love of God and our neighbour and to desire nothing beside our Creator* (Hom. IV. in Ezek.). It is, in a word, nothing else but that *love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which he hath given us* (Rom. v. 5), inasmuch as through this love of God *we are aflame to gaze on his beauty.*

Look, and make according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount (Exod. xxv. 40). It is God himself who is to be our Model; *we are to imitate the interior life of God* (St. Ignatius Loyola), the Divine Type by which we are to re-form ourselves, the Image to which we are to be conformed. It is the end which determines all human desire and action, some object seen as desirable and so sought after. But the end must first be seen and known, and so it is that God has revealed himself to man, making known to him that which he could not attain to by use of reason alone. Reason, contemplating the works of God, can arrive at the knowledge of the existence of God, and Holy Scripture utters the reproach: *Surely vain are all men by nature who are ignorant of God and could not out of the good things that are seen know him that is,* blaming them, *for if they were able to know so much that they could aim at the world: how did they not sooner find out the Lord thereof?* (Wisd. xiii. 1-9). But both the limitations of human reason in itself and the blindness which came as a result of sin made it impossible for reason alone to know God with that knowledge which is eternal life. So God unveiled so much of his Nature, Being, and Will as it was necessary for man to know in order to attain to his end, and that revelation made in Jesus Christ and conveyed to us through his Mystical Body, the Catholic Church, is ours to receive, enter into, and make our own, a knowledge of God so perfect in itself that, as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches, any share in it, *however imperfect, confers a supreme perfection upon the soul* (Contra Gent. I.).

FIRST FRIDAY IN LENT

To seek God that our souls may live in the knowledge of him who is the Life and the Light of men. What are the conditions of that search?

First, faith; for *he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him* (Heb. xi. 6). Faith, which is not an emotion, a self-engendered feeling, but a gift of God conferred upon us in Holy Baptism, a gift which enables us to believe in God and his word, not because of any reasons or evidence, but simply on the authority of God himself speaking to us through his Church. Faith is an act of the intellect, the homage of the mind, aided by grace, to the Divine Word, the *bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ* (2 Cor. x. 5), who is the perfect revelation of God, the full expression of the Eternal Mind. It is, in the admirable definition of St. Paul, the *substance of things hoped for,* *the evidence of things not seen* (Heb. xi. 1), by which, like Moses, we endure *as seeing him who is invisible* (Heb. xi. 27), and with all the saints of old see the promises far off and are persuaded of them, embrace and confess them, living and walking in the full assurance that the word of the Lord is true and endureth for ever. *Faith,* says Bossuet, *is the union of two apparently contradictory things: the conviction that certain things are which at the same time are not perceptible to sight. The authority of faith causes as firm a conviction as to the existence of the invisible things of God as we have of the things which we see and touch, of which we have a full and entire comprehension. Thus faith is, without evidence and in the midst of obscurity, an entire persuasion, a full security, an absolute conviction, a perfect acquiescence in the truth, and the repose of the whole spirit in the consent thus given by the mind* (Instr. et d'oraison, ch. 15).

Faith, then, is the first rung in the ladder by which the soul ascends to the knowledge of God; it is the beginning of our salvation because it brings us to God our Saviour. Repeatedly in the Gospel we hear our Lord's word, *Thy faith hath saved thee,* and this is so because it is faith which moves us to come out of our self-created darkness into that Light in which we see light, which brings us into that living, personal contact with our Lord by which we touch him and are made whole. Faith does not create the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; they exist, realities independent of our faith or knowledge, having God alone as their Cause and Principle. Faith adds to our faculty of vision, extends its range beyond the limitations of sense and natural reason:

> " Faith alone, our sight transcending,
> Shows true hearts the mystery."

It enables us *to know the things that are freely given to us of God* (1 Cor. ii. 12), to see and touch and taste the hidden mysteries of the Kingdom of God, to enter into *the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ . . . in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him* (Eph. iii. 9-12), coming no longer, as did the Israelites of old, to the *shadow of good things to come* (Heb. x. 1), but enabled, *with a true heart in full assurance of faith* (Heb. x. 22), to draw near to the divine realities themselves.

And, first, to God who IS—*I am that I am* (Exod. iii. 14)—the Self-Existent, Uncaused Being in whom Essence and Existence are one, who is Necessary Being—*i.e.,* who must and does exist of himself—is all that it is possible that God should be, full and complete perfection within the circle of his own Blessed Life, who would still be God, as he has ever been, were all creation to come to naught, who is *the substantial Cause and Creator of Being, Existence, Substance, and Nature; the Beginning and the Measuring Principle of ages; the Reality underlying time and the Eternity underlying existences; the time in which created things pass; the Existence of those that have any kind of existence; the Life-process of those which in any way pass through that process* (Dion., Divine Names v. 4). God who is and *by whose word all things consist, of whom* *we may speak much and yet come short; wherefore in sum, he is ALL* (Ecclus. xliii. 27-28).

Second, to God who is a rewarder of them that seek him, who has promised, *Ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart* (Jer. xxix. 13), a promise which faith hears and receives as the word of Very Truth who cannot deceive or be deceived. *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever* (Isa. xl. 7). It is in such a faith resting upon the word of God that, with Abraham, father of the faithful, *we are fully persuaded that what he has promised he is also able to perform* (Rom. iv. 21). In an unbounded confidence rooted in the loving mercy of God, who calls to the soul, *Turn ye even unto me* (Joel ii. 12), for *whosoever cometh to me I will in no wise cast out* (St. John vi. 37), every child of God may enter upon the journey of faith, may seek for that knowledge which is eternal life since it is the knowledge of him who is the soul's true life, for *man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God* (St. Matt. iv. 4), and he himself is that true and living Bread *which cometh down from heaven that man may eat thereof and not die* (St. John vi. 50).

FIRST SATURDAY IN LENT

Once we have come to a living faith in God desire awakens within the soul. In truth, as we have seen, man has a natural desire for God; his insatiable search after happiness springs from nothing less than the fact that he was created for God, the ultimate and full perfection of his being. That he constantly mistakes the end in which his happiness lies is no proof that he was not destined for it, but only that he is blind to where it alone exists. And when by the mercy of God he comes to himself, that desire rests at last upon the true object of his search, as faith sets before him the infinite Beauty of the Adorable Creator whom all unknowingly he has ever desired.

Desire *is the deep interior of the heart. We shall receive it if we expand our desire as widely as we can.* It is for this that all the practices of religion are intended, *not only that desire may be planted and grow, but that it should be increased to such a capacity as to be able to receive the things that eye hath not seen nor ear heard* (St. Aug., Hom. on St. John xl. 10). This desire must be the incentive which both initiates and carries on the whole of our life towards its end. *The beginning of wisdom is the sincerity of the desire . . . therefore the desire of wisdom bringeth to a kingdom* (Wisd. vi. 17-20). It is the first stirring of the love of God within the heart, a movement by which it reaches out and opens itself to the operation of God. *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him* (Apoc. iii. 20). For desire creates within us a capacity to receive that which we desire, and every exercise and expression of our desire deepens and extends that capacity. To desire knowledge of and love for God is to have something of that knowledge and love already in our hearts. *You would not have* *sought me had you not already found me* (Pascal). Too often we forget that God alone is the Author of all our good, attributing to ourselves what is his gift. *What hast thou that thou hast not received?* (1 Cor. iv. 7). It is God who is both the prompter and the answer of our desire; it is his love which draws us to himself—*We love him because he first loved us* (1 St. John iv. 19)—and our desire for him *is* love for him. Slight, imperfect, wavering it may be, as a candle flame quivering in the wind, or as the tiny sparks of fire in the midst of a heap of dull, damp matter. But if we tend it, guard it, exercise it, it will spring into a flame, into such a fire as the Sacred Heart came to kindle on earth, a fire of Divine love, consuming, purifying, illuminating, and transforming, as does the fire the iron bar placed within it, the dull substance of our nature into a living flame of love for God.

Yet how shall we desire that which we do not know, or know so imperfectly that our knowledge is but a surface-impression, a mere acquiescence in a fact which has no real influence upon our lives and actions? There must be some sight to enkindle desire, to excite the thirst which cries: *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O my God* (Ps. xlii. 1). This psalm is sung, says St. Augustine, as a *Psalm for Understanding. For what understanding? Come, my brethren, catch my eagerness; share with me in this my longing: let us both hasten to the well of Understanding: let us long for that Fountain of which another Scripture saith, For with thee is the well of life. For he is both the Fountain and the Light; for* *it is in thy Light that we shall see light. If he is both the Fountain and the Light, with good reason is he the Understanding also, because he both filleth the soul with knowledge, and everyone who hath "understanding" is enlightened by a certain light; not an outward but an inward light* (Enarr. Ps. XLII.).

Well, then, does the Church bid us address God as him *from whom all good desires do come* (Coll. for Peace) and to pray that we *may love the thing which thou commandest and desire that which thou dost promise* (Easter IV.), and *grant that we may be inflamed with heavenly desires and thirst after the fountain of life* (Blessing of Font at Pentecost). For let us but so pray, and *he unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known* (Coll. for Purity), will assuredly hear us, as it is written: *He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him* (Ps. cxlv. 19).

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

He who in faith and desire seeks after God already possesses him for whom he seeks. *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you* (St. Jas. iv. 8). Not as though our drawing nigh was an unaided act of our own, for from the beginning *it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure* (Phil. ii. 13). The prodigal comes to himself because, though he has left the Father, the Father has not left him; it is the Divine dwelling within that in very truth has caused all the pleasures of sin to become as less than nothing and awakened that thirst for the Living Fountain, the Eternal Home of the soul. It is the first perception of God which awakens, not only desire, but penitence, that Christian penitence which is quite other than the *sorrow of the world* (2 Cor. vii. 10), being founded in the sight, not of sin or its punishment, but of a God wounded by sin. Reaching out to the Vision of God, the soul is both blinded and illuminated by the pure Light of him *in whom is no darkness at all* (1 St. John i. 5), and in that Light catches a glimpse of its own darkness, a realisation so vivid that the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* it fain would have mingled with the *Sanctus* of angels resolves itself into a *Kyrie Eleison—God be merciful to me a sinner* (St. Luke xviii. 13). Thus it was with holy Job when he came to the knowledge of God—*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes* (Job xlii. 3-6). So Isaiah, at the sight of God *high and lifted up,* cried, *Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips* (Isa. vi. 5), and St. Peter, confounded by Divine Omnipotence in human flesh, fell down upon his knees, saying: *Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man* (St. Luke v. 8). Both the prophet and the Apostle had yet to learn that the God *whose eyes are purer than to behold iniquity* (Hab. i. 13) is no less the God who is the Salvation of his people, *full of compassion and mercy,* who deals not with us after our sins, nor rewardeth us according to our wickedness (Ps. ciii. 8-10). In the first shock of a true self-knowledge, or in the oft-repeated falls, there is ever the subtle temptation to a false humility, a vain penitence which would think more of our own unworthiness than of the everlasting mercy of God, a penitence of human fashioning and temper which would hide itself in a corner as a sulky child, wrapped in its own darkness. True penitence, forgetting no whit of the malice and ingratitude of sin, sees even more clearly the Infinite Love which waits but one word to forgive and cleanse, sees that its most creaturely act, most childlike act, is to fling itself in confidence into the arms of the Most-loving Father. Such a penitence, repeated if need be a thousand times a day, is an act by which we most honour God, whom by our sin we have dishonoured, and most quickly advance in the way of salvation. There is no lesson more important for our spiritual life than this. *It is one thing to arise quickly, another not to fall* (St. Aug.). And it is in this rising quickly from our falls with the best act of contrition that we can make at the time that we come to an ever-new knowledge of God. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God* (St. Matt. v. 8). Vain indeed would be our hope of that Vision were it but for the Divine mercy, which in the moment of true penitence floods our hearts with its cleansing and illuminating Light. Idle to waste our time in self-reproach, in disgust at our impurity, in regretting the past. *Drive away your melancholy,* writes St. Paul of the Cross to Agnes Grazi, *even if you fall into some fault, never be troubled, for that would be a greater evil than the fault itself; but humble yourself before God, speak to him with filial love.* The Divine Purity can alone purify our hearts, and in so doing he gives us precious revelations of himself, a saving knowledge by which we advance to a fuller comprehension of what God is in himself and to us. Walk we, then, by the sure path of a humble penitence, not with our eyes cast down upon self, but uplifted to the Deifying Light, not dwelling upon but confessing our sins with a true and loving contrition, not lying where the malice of the devil or the frailty of our nature has tripped us up, but rising quickly and going on with a new knowledge and a deeper appreciation of the immeasurable loving-kindness of our God.

MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself (St. John vii. 17). The truest sign of our penitence is to be found in the amendment of our life, since by this we proclaim the reality of our contrition. *Turn from evil and do good* (Ps. xxxiv. 14), for there can be no turning from evil except by the doing of good, some actual manifestation of that love for the Good which alone constitutes Christian penitence. And more than that, our Lord tells us, the doing of the will of God is one of the conditions of our gaining knowledge of him who is Truth. *Believe the commandments of God, and do them, and he will give you the strength of understanding. Do not put the last first* *and prefer knowledge to the commandments of God* (St. Aug., Hom. on St. John lxvii.). For it is to those who in love keep his commandments that our Lord declares that he will manifest himself. *In purifying our souls in obeying the truth* (1 St. Pet. i. 22) we open the way for the coming of the Truth himself; nay, we become an abode in which the Most Holy Trinity deigns to dwell (St. John xiv. 23).

Such teaching lifts us above all the quagmires of superstition and of a false mysticism, above all that self-indulgent enjoyment of religious exercises which, making *a fair show in the flesh* (Gal. vi. 12), bears little, if any, relation to life and conduct. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven* (St. Matt. vii. 21). It bids us show our faith and penitence by our works, by a doing of the will of God, a *running in the way of his commandments* (Ps. cxix. 32). It insists that there are duties and obligations in religion, not because it is an outward code, a thing of "doing," but precisely because it is founded in an interior charity, in a love for God which expresses itself in devotion, the flower of charity, devotion which, as St. François de Sales says, is nothing else than *a certain excelling degree of charity which not only makes us ready, active, and diligent in observing all the commandments of God, but also prompts us to do readily and heartily as many good works as we can* (Devout Life, ch. i.).

It is by a living faith, operative in a devoted obedience, that we grow in the knowledge of God—*Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to* *virtue knowledge* (2 St. Pet. i. 5)—for every act of obedience brings us more into conformity with the Divine will, since it is a putting on of *the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created us* (Col. iii. 10). Of our Lord we are told that it was when he went down to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph and *was subject unto them* that he *increased in wisdom* (St. Luke ii. 51-52). *The disciple is not above his master* (St. Matt. x. 24), and the Christian, *alter Christus,* rises by obedience from the place of servant to that of friend, the friendship of an intimate knowledge and love of his Lord. *Ye are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his master doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you* (St. John xv. 14-15). Knowledge which is eternal life, since it is union of mind and heart and will in entire obedience to the Mind, Heart, and Will of God.

TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

Second of the theological virtues, Hope is the sustaining power of the soul, resting, as it does, upon the mercy, the promises, and the power of God. It is a great thing once to have realised the truth of the Apostle's words, *We cannot do the things that we* *would* (Gal. v. 17), that *through the weakness of our human nature we can do no good thing without thee* (Coll. Trin. I.), *without me ye can do nothing* (St. John xv. 5), that *there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved* (Acts iv. 12) but the Adorable and Powerful Name of Jesus our Saviour and God. Drawn from nothingness by the mercy of God, nothingness in ourselves, incapable by nature and incapacitated by sin of any good of our own, all our hope must be rooted in the mercy which created us, the promises which have been made to us, the power which alone preserves us in being. *For who is God but the Lord? or who hath any strength except our God?* (Ps. xviii. 31). *My hope and my fortress; my castle and deliverer; my defender in whom I trust* (Ps. cxliv. 2). By faith we perceive the eternal Good, the purified mind fixes itself upon the End to be attained, by hope the will moves toward that End. It is, says St. Thomas, *a movement towards the good* (Summa Theol., I. ii. 25, 3). By hope, says the Apostle, *we draw nigh unto God* (Heb. vii. 19), relying upon and seeking in him that grace which is necessary to bring us to glory, both of which we beg of him.

A strong hope, a firm confidence in God, is one of the things most necessary to our spiritual life and most honouring to him. We cannot be too doubtful about ourselves: *Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall* (1 Cor. x. 12). We cannot be too sure of God: *Ye that fear the Lord, hope for good, and for everlasting joy and mercy. Look at the generations of old and see; did any ever* *trust in the Lord, and was confounded? or did any abide in his fear, and was forsaken? or whom did he ever despise, that called upon him?* (Ecclus. ii. 9-10). With entire confidence we may cry with St. Paul: *I know whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day* (2 St. Tim. i. 12).

What incredible foolishness to distrust the mercy, the promises, and the power of God! foolishness which holds us back from any true service, weakens us in the face of temptation, hinders our prayers, adds discouragement and despair to our falls, and prevents any real progress in the Christian life. *Woe unto him that is faint-hearted! for he believeth not; therefore shall he not be defended* (Ecclus. ii. 13). To walk sadly, fearfully, despondently is not meant to be the lot of the children of God called to *serve the Lord in gladness* (Ps. c. 2). Is not *the earth full of the mercy of the Lord?* (Ps. xxxviii. 5). Is not *the eye of the Lord upon them that hope in his mercy?* (Ps. xxxviii. 18). Is there one who has not cause to say from his heart, *Praised be God who hath not cast out my prayer, nor turned his mercy from me* (Ps. lxvi. 18)? Do we conceive of God as one who promises but does not perform, forgetting that he, *willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast* (Heb. vi. 17-19)? Or do we doubt the power of God to do all and more than he has promised?

Whence comes the lack of this virtue but from our scanty knowledge of God as revealed to us in all his works, in Holy Scripture, in the lives of his saints? *Israel doth not know, my people do not consider* (Isa. i. 3). Did we but study and reflect upon the words and the works of God, whose *thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways his ways* (Isa. iv. 8), our hope would be indeed an anchor firmly implanted in him, a hope founded in a supreme conviction born of a living experience, *which maketh not ashamed, but ever to rejoice in hope of the glory of God* (Rom. v. 2-5).

WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfection (Col. iii. 14). The term Charity, as used in Holy Scripture and in theology, expresses that perfect form of love rooted, not in passion or sentiment, but in the will, by which we are united to God. It is the greatest of the theological virtues—that is, those which have God as their direct object—and confers a supreme activity or tendency of the soul in a state of grace towards God. It is essentially an act of the will by which our wills are conformed to the will of God, so that, loving what God loves, we attain to a union of likeness with him: *He that dwelleth in love* *dwelleth in God, and God in him* (1 St. John iv. 16). The act of charity is determined or motived by the fact of God himself; we are to love him, not primarily for what he is to us, but for what he is in himself, *because he is God,* All-Perfect, All-Beautiful, All-Adorable, All-Lovable. Thus there can be no limits in charity; *the measure of loving God is to love him without measure. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind* (St. Matt. xxii. 37). But this perfection of charity is not something to be regarded as possible to be immediately realised, but as the end toward which we should be continually advancing, according to our Lord's words: *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect* (St. Matt. v. 48). For, as St. Thomas says, *the end which is first in intention is last in accomplishment,* and it is toward the end that we are to strive by the keeping of the commandments, *for the end of the commandment is charity* (1 St. Tim. i. 5). *If a man love me, he will keep my words* (St. John xiv. 22), *for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments* (1 St. John v. 5).

All love, we have said, presupposes some knowledge, and eternal life begun here on earth consists in knowing God by faith, a knowledge which tends to produce desire and love. A faith which is a mere assent, an acquiescence, which does not move the soul to love of the will for God, is dead. But once faith has begun to quicken within the soul, especially by the practice of mental or reflective prayer, then charity springs to life, the whole of our nature being drawn towards God as we experience his Truth, Beauty, and Love, *tasting and seeing that the Lord is gracious* (Ps. xxxiv. 8). So prayed St. Anselm: *Grant me to touch with my heart that which I touch with my mind.* Love grows with knowledge, and knowledge is only gained by love. The first steps in the acquirement of an art or science are painful and tedious, but as we progress the subject begins to possess us; as we grow in knowledge of it, so we love it the more; and love impels to further knowledge, which ever becomes a more real and intimate possession of our own. So is it with love for God, which is faith *aflame with his Beauty,* the will centred in and moved by Divine Charity itself, revolving round and

> *" roll'd onward, like a wheel*
> *In even motion, by the Love impelled*
> *That moves the sun in Heaven and all the stars."*
> PARADISO xxxiii.

THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (St. Matt. v. 8). There has never been any doubt in the minds of men as to the need of purity of heart in him who would draw near to God. However much they may have fallen below their ideal, they have ever preserved it in their religious rites, in which some form of symbolic purification from sin has always appeared. The pages of pagan literature are full of the truth that the preliminary and continuous steps in the seeking for the knowledge of God are made by an ever-increasing detachment from the lower self, the passions and desires, and, so far as is possible, from all pre-occupation with external things. Our Lord has sealed this instinctive conviction with a plain word. To the pure in heart alone is the Vision of God granted; *without holiness no man shall see the Lord* (Heb. xii. 14). This is no mere arbitrary precept; it arises from both the character and the end of knowledge of God, the slightest form of which is in some sort a seeing of God. For it is a knowledge which is at once possession and likeness, both a gaining of and a becoming like that which is seen and known. Begun by a participation in the Divine nature (2 St. Pet. i. 4), its whole purpose is to bring about the full union of the soul with God. But this can only be when the fulness of our sonship by grace is realised, and for this there must be nothing in us which is contrary to or which hinders the fullest operation of God within our souls. Thus the progress of the Christian life has always been regarded as a gradual, persevering purification, first of all from sin, and then from any attachment to creatures that would in any way prevent a complete surrender of the whole self to God. The soul that would see God must tread the Threefold Way of Purification, Illumination, and Union. Of Purification, for *in vain does one strive after the vision of God, who does not shun the stains of sin* (Cassian, Coll. XIV.); of Illumination, in which the Divine Light purifies, heals, and enlightens; of Union, in which by successive degrees the soul is more closely at-oned with God. Two things especially need to be remembered in our seeking after purity of heart. First, that the detachment from creatures which it implies is not, for the Christian living in the world, an entire renunciation of but a right use of creatures as means to our end. It is the taking care *not to be entangled with the affairs of this life* (2 St. Tim. ii. 4), *to use this world, as not abusing it* (1 Cor. vii. 31), to constantly remember that *we cannot serve God and mammon* (St. Matt. vi. 24), to see that no idol is set up in the temple of the Living God.

Second, the purification of the heart is more speedily and surely accomplished by a constant turning away from self in order to pay attention to God than by mere efforts at repressing the evil within us or of resisting temptations from without. Self-examination is necessary, but overmuch attention to self and sin will only result in fastening their fetters more tightly upon us. To *delight in the Lord* (Ps. xxxvii. 4), *to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness* (St. Matt. vi. 33), will do far more for us than by any gazing upon self, and the more we freely open our hearts to God, the more will he cleanse and illuminate them with the rays of his own Divine Purity.

FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

In our days religion, to a large number of people, has come to mean either going to church or an adherence to a moral code of behaviour. Thus, for some it consists in a frequent attendance at services which have very little, if any, effect upon the life, whilst to others church-going is looked upon as a pious luxury which can safely be ignored so long as one endeavours to keep the moral law. The truth is that religion does not consist in either of these alone, but in an attitude which embraces the whole of life. Of this attitude, worship is the highest expression and morality is a necessary result; but something more is needed. As Christians we are saved and sanctified, not by specifically *religious* acts alone or by keeping the moral law, but also by the due performance of the duties of our state of life, which a spiritual writer has termed *private sacraments of the will of God to us.* Almighty God wills *that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 St. Tim. ii. 4), and, this being so, the means of salvation must be available to all, and, since corporate worship, reception of the Sacraments, etc., are not always available for all, they cannot be exclusive means of salvation. Where they are to be had they are to be used, though even here, whilst the Church encourages frequency, she does not make it of obligation; the *obligations* she lays upon her children are very few. But the vast majority of souls can do no more than fulfil these bare obligations, and for them, though it is true of all, the sanctification of their souls depends largely upon prayer and the performance of the duties of their state of life. It is *in doing all to the glory of God* (1 Cor. x. 31) that the religious attitude consists, a doing rendered possible by the grace given through the Sacraments and in answer to prayer. It is in and by all the ordinary, common duties of life, *sanctified by the word of God and prayer* (1 St. Tim. iv. 5), that we are enabled to *praise, reverence, and serve God, and by this means to save our souls* (Ignat., Exer. Principle). Here, too, is another means by which we grow in the knowledge of God, who comes to us, not by some royal road, but along the narrow, busy ways of our daily lives and surroundings. Often, like the Jews of old, we look for him only in some epiphany of splendour and majesty, and so miss his coming in the humble forms in which still he loves to clothe himself. We wonder what it is which causes the peace and joy, the calm radiancy of Christ-likeness which shines in the lives of many whose conditions and surroundings are so much more unfavourable, as we imagine, than our own. We contrast them with others who are to be found constantly in church, and yet . . . The whole secret is in this—that to the former all life is something to be lived and offered to God, every action is in some sort a Mass, an offering made to the Most Holy Trinity in and through the Sacred Heart of Jesus. So all the common ways and things of life are transfigured, and the Christ of Nazareth perpetuates himself in every moment and act of our passing time, making them revelations of his love and wisdom, burning bushes in which may be discerned the glory of God.

SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken (Isa. i. 2). God hath spoken, he has revealed himself, uttered that Word, the expression of his Eternal Mind, *Word of God, living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit* (Heb. iv. 12), Word by which *we are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever* (1 St. Pet. i. 23), *the engrafted Word which is able to save your souls* (St. Jas. i. 21). Little need to distinguish here between Jesus, the Word of God, and his words, since in him the word is the true transcript of his Thought, his Mind, his Knowledge, and his Love. *The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and life* (St. John vi. 63), and *heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away* (St. Matt. xxiv. 35).

Never has there been a saint or a devout Catholic Christian who has not had a great reverence for Holy Scripture, the word of God. How could it be otherwise of that word of which the Divine Speaker himself declares: *As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall* *prosper in the thing whereto I sent it* (Isa. lv. 10-11). And it should be noted that these words come immediately after the saying, *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.* How, then, shall we hope to gain a true knowledge of God if we neglect his words, which are the life and light of our souls, words which have a truly sacramental value? For this knowledge, we have seen, is one of possession, and St. Augustine says *the fulness and the end of all the Divine Scriptures is the love of the thing which is our fruition* (De Doct. Christ. i. 35). We are to read Holy Scripture in order to find God, who *showeth himself through the lattice* (Cant. ii. 9) of his written word, to learn that *love of the Lord which passeth all things for illumination* (Ecclus. xxv. 11), love which will awaken the desire of conforming our minds and wills to that which we read, of putting on the mind of Christ revealed to us in the *gracious words which proceed from his mouth* (St. Luke iv. 22).

To read and meditate upon Holy Scripture is one of the necessary means of our progress in the knowledge of God, *for the word of God most high is the fountain of wisdom* (Ecclus. i. 5). *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly* (Col. iii. 16), word of the Divine Sower, which, falling on the good ground, shall spring up an hundredfold. To this end Holy Scripture must be read as *the word of God,* with deep reverence, slowly, the mind "ruminating," as St. Augustine says, upon what is read, so that the letter conveys life. *The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life* (2 Cor. iii. 6). These letters from our heavenly country are to be read as those of our

Divine Lover, to be kept and pondered in our hearts, recalled in moments of temptation, *Thy word have I hid within my heart, that I should not sin against thee* (Ps. cxix. 11); in times of difficulty, *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet* (Ps. cxix. 141); in an ever-remembrance of our Lord's *If ye continue in my word, ye are my disciples indeed* (St. John viii. 31).

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Man reaches the knowledge of truth in two ways, says St. Thomas: first, from another and in this way, as regards God, he needs prayer, *Wherefore I prayed, and understanding was given me: I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me* (Wisd. vii. 7); second, personal study and meditation. The chief object of prayer, then, is that we may know God and so come into union with him. *Prayer tends to God through being moved by the will of charity, and this in two ways. First, on the part of the object of our petition, because when we pray we ought principally to ask to be united to God, according to Psalm xxvi. 4. "One thing have I desired of the Lord; this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." Secondly, on the part of the petitioner, who ought to approach the person whom he petitions, either locally, as when he petitions a man, or mentally, as when he petitions God* (Summa Theol., II. ii., lxxxiii. 1).

Prayer is an act of the intellect moved by the will desiring some good from God, *a lifting up of the mind to God, an unveiling of our mind in his presence* (Dion., Divine Names iii.). To pray is to gaze upon, to pay attention to God, to delight in him. *I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication* (Dan. ix. 3). *It is the interpreter of a desire*, for the *desire of charity is the cause of prayer*, and the more continuous our desire, even though it cannot be always expressed in words, and need not be, since *we are not heard for our much speaking* (St. Matt. vi. 7), the more do we pray always as the Apostle bids us. *Faith, hope, and charity are by themselves a prayer of continual longing,* wrote St. Augustine to Proba.

Prayer is an opening of the heart *in the affection of its fervent passion, that it may take in and, while taking in, kindle itself; and whilst, with a longing desire, the soul is agape after heavenly things, in a marvellous way it tastes the very things it longs for* (St. Greg., Mag. Mor. xv. 53). So the Psalmist cries, *My heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God* (Ps. lxxxiv. 2), *my heart said to thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek* (Ps. xxvii. 8), and Holy Church exhorts us daily to *lift up our hearts* to God in the Mass.

Prayer is a surrender of our will. We do not pray in an endeavour to persuade God to do what we will, but that we may know and receive grace to do his will, that, as St. Gregory says, *by asking we may deserve to receive what Almighty God from eternity has disposed to give* (Dial. I.) That God's will may be done is the end and condition of all our prayer, and it is for this reason that, since *we know not what we should pray for as we* *ought, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities* (Rom. viii. 26), teaching and aiding us to pray according to the Divine Will. *To pray in spirit and in truth is to set about praying through the instigation of the Spirit,* says St. Thomas (Summa Theol., II. ii., lxxxiii. 13); it is to yield to the desire of *the Spirit of adoption within us whereby we cry, Abba, Father* (Rom. viii. 15), and in the power of that Spirit to pray, *Not my will, but thine, be done* (St. Luke xxii. 42).

Nothing, then, is more necessary to prayer than docility to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God* (Rom. viii. 14). And it is precisely as children of God that we are to pray: *When ye pray, say, Our Father* (St. Matt. vi. 7-9). For thus we pray *in the Name* of Christ—*i.e.,* in his Person, as sharers in his Sonship, by which we have been made children of God by grace as he is the Only-Begotten Son of God by nature. It is in him and by him and through him alone that we *lift up holy hands of prayer* (1 St. Tim. ii. 8) and are heard for his sake, *accepted in the Beloved* (Eph. i. 6).

MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT

The methods by which any knowledge is gained are invariably the same. There is the necessity of a teacher who conveys to us what is known of the particular subject, of faith in his words, of linking practice to theory, of persevering through the dulness and monotony of the early stages, the gradual fitting in of our new knowledge to the rest of our thought and the consequent enrichment of our whole life and outlook. In all this the beginnings are of great importance. To start right and to master the tiresome preliminaries save us a host of troubles later on. Not otherwise is it in the seeking after the knowledge which is eternal life; hence the insistence of spiritual guides upon the value of mental prayer, the prayer of beginners. For what we first require is not only accurate knowledge of Divine Truth, such knowledge as may be found in a theological textbook, but that additional knowledge which, as St. Thomas says, *is gained in prayer and meditation and which enriches our interior life.* The truths concerning God and the soul cannot be treated as one treats the truths of geometry or natural science; they are living things, with the most real and intimate connection with our lives. The dogmas of theology and Holy Scripture are often looked upon as "dry," and dry indeed are they as sometimes presented to us. But the greatest and holiest of theologians, St. Thomas Aquinas, saw theology as it is, an impression of the Divine Knowledge itself, a participation in the heavenly knowledge possessed by God and the Blessed. Thus he was convinced that not study alone but study joined with prayer was the only way to apprehend, assimilate, and convey Divine truths; and when asked by St. Bonaventura where he had acquired such supernatural knowledge, pointed to his crucifix, saying: "In that book I have learnt more than in all others."

Meditation, in which some truth of the faith is considered, reflected upon, *seen into* in more or less degree, produces acts of prayer arising from the subject by which convictions are deepened and strengthened within the soul. The mere word is translated into fact, or, rather, the fact, the reality existent outside and independently of ourselves, becomes fact and reality to ourselves. It is an experience akin to that of actually going to live in a country which previously we had only known by hearsay, by what persons, books, and pictures had told us. Now we begin to know it for ourselves, and this knowledge affects us as none other could. So is it with our true *patria,* the heavenly country of God and supernatural things. Already by faith we have accepted the fact of its existence, we have been told and have read about it. Now in the prayer of meditation we enter into it, tread its streets, learn its ways and language, realise our *citizenship is in heaven* (Eph. ii. 19), become more and more one with the life of eternity. Granted that our first steps will and must be slow and tentative, that we shall have to struggle with our blindness and dulness, that the world, the flesh, and the devil will pursue us with distractions, that we shall often seem to have wasted our time and derived no good from our meditation, yet there is no task which in reality effects more permanent results upon our life, and we may well be content to sit humbly in the school of prayer wherein is learnt the highest knowledge possible to man, remembering the words of St. Thomas, *Any knowledge of God, however slight it may be, confers a supreme perfection upon the soul* (Contra Gent. I.), since it is the beginning of our eternal life.

TUESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT

As we persevere in the practice of mental prayer we shall become aware that the time devoted to thinking of and reflecting upon our subject tends to diminish, that we turn more easily and more quickly to prayer itself, and that our acts of prayer, which at first were of various kinds, are gradually resolving themselves into a few acts or even one simple act of a loving attention to God. This means that we are arriving at what is known as the *prayer of Simplicity,* which is more of the nature of an attitude than of certain acts, the attitude of one who looks at, loves, and desires God. The difference between this prayer and ordinary meditation may be compared with the two different ways in which we may gaze upon a wide expanse of beautiful country, or listen to an exquisitely rendered piece of music. At times we just look or listen in a sort of breathless comprehension and enjoyment of the thing as a whole, " drinking it all in," as we say, in a silent contentment. At other times we consider this whole part by part, regarding first this and then that, analysing, comparing, in a series of various and dissimilar acts. Meditation is comparable to the latter, the prayer of Simplicity to the former act. It is *a waiting upon the Lord* (Ps. cxxiii. 2), *a resting in him* (Ps. xxxvii. 7), *an abiding in his presence* (Ps. xci. 1); *the prayer,* as teaches St. Jane Frances de Chantal, *of a calm attention of the soul to God, which tends to moderate the too great activity of the* *faculties, and which places it in interior silence and in a repose of its powers* (Petit Traité sur l'Oraison); an *holding of oneself very simply in God* (St. Francis de Sales, Letter 282), *a simple looking or loving attention to a divine object, be it God himself or one of his perfections, or Jesus Christ or one of his mysteries* (Bossuet).

It is important to note that when we are drawn to this kind of prayer we should obey the attraction of the Holy Spirit, and not imagine that we are " doing nothing," but only wasting our time. The Saints are unanimous in teaching that in such prayer we advance much more rapidly in the knowledge and love of God than in ordinary meditation. *Be still, then, and know that I am God* (Ps. xlvi. 10); *They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength* (Isa. xl. 31). For the fact *that we thus hold ourselves in the presence of God constitutes prayer,* teaches St. Jane Frances, who further tells us that *in this state of holy indolence our capacity for love grows greater and the shafts of Divine Love strike far more deeply: our own activity keeps the soul chained; it is in silence that it grows.* As the flowers all-silently turned toward the sun drink in the one pure light and reflect that same light in a rich variety of colours, so souls *looking unto Jesus* (Heb. xii. 2), the Sun of Righteousness, drink of that Fountain of Life, and each reflects, in its own individuality, the one light in innumerable shades of holiness. In such prayer, wherein we expose ourselves to the Divine influence, our Lord imprints his virtues upon our souls so that *we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the* *same image from glory unto glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord* (2 Cor. iii. 18).

WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT

The highest spiritual state of the soul in this life consists in the vision and contemplation of Truth, wherein are joys, and the full enjoyment of the highest and truest Good, and a breadth of serenity and eternity (St. Aug., De quant. Animæ). St. Augustine is no doubt speaking of what is now commonly called "infused" contemplation, which is a pure gift of God, rendering the soul entirely passive under his influence. Such a degree of prayer we can do nothing to attain, but there is an initial form of contemplation, commonly called "Acquired Contemplation," which would seem to consist of a combination of our efforts and of a special grace of God which raises it above the prayer of Simplicity of which we have thought. St. John of the Cross speaks of it as "infused," but says also that it is reached by frequent acts of mental prayer in which we alternate between definite acts and *a loving or peaceful attendance upon God . . . in this state meditation and the work of the faculties ceases; and we may rather say that knowledge and sweetness are wrought in the soul, which abstains from every effort except only that it attends lovingly upon God, without any desire to see or feel anything further than to be in the hands of God, who now communicates* *himself to the soul thus passive* (Ascent of Mt. Carmel II. xv.).

Those who, by faithfulness to prayer and mortification, have made some real advance in the prayer of Simplicity will recognise something of at least an occasional experience similar to that which St. John describes, times in which all their prayer alternates between clear, distinct acts and moments when they are, as it were, wrapt in God, possessed by him, moments in which they touch and taste that the Lord is gracious, inexpressible moments in which they reach that state where all the faculties of the soul seem suspended in *a naked intent toward God.* These moments pass all too quickly, but they leave us with a freshness of knowledge which cannot be better expressed than in St. Augustine's words: *When after calling upon God for aid, I begin to rise to him, and to those things which are most real, I enjoy at times such a vivid realisation of the things that abide, that I am surprised that I should require any process of reasoning in order to persuade myself of the reality of things as truly present to me as I am to myself* (Epist. iv. 2).

The gift of contemplation is the reward of those who are docile to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who yield themselves ever more and more to the operations of Divine grace, who, giving themselves generously to the love of God, grow to be aflame to gaze upon his beauty. It is, as it were, a touch of the finger of God finding a ready response from the soul, moved thereto by the gifts of the Holy Ghost—Knowledge, Understanding, and Wisdom. Especially is it the last which disposes the soul for contemplation, for it is *Wisdom which guideth in right paths, sheweth the kingdom of God, and giveth knowledge of holy things* (Wisd. x. 10); *entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God* (Wisd. vii. 27), *for she is a teacher of the mysteries of the knowledge of God* (Wisd. viii. 4), *and thy counsel who hath known, except thou give wisdom and sendeth thy Holy Spirit from above* (Wisd. ix. 17). *For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of men, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, that we might know the things which are freely given us of God* (1 Cor. ii. 9-10).

THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT

Reviewing what has been said as to the necessity of sacred study and meditation, the reading of Holy Scripture, and the daily reflection upon the mysteries of the supernatural order, all infused with the spirit and practice of prayer, let us recall the words of St. Thomas: *Life comes before learning: for life tends to the knowledge of the Truth* (Comm. in Matt. V.). The cardinal and moral virtues—Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude, Humility, Chastity, Patience, Peace, Joy—all are needed in our seeking after God. *None can come to the sublime heights of my divinity if they have not experienced the bitterness and lowliness of my humanity,* said the Eternal Wisdom to Suso. The study of Divine Truth is for ever beset by the tumult of the passions and the pressure of outward things, and he who would tread the way to God must exercise that discipline and mortification which frees the soul from their tyranny and, uniting all its powers, directs them to the one End. *If thou desire wisdom, keep the commandments* (Ecclus. i. 26). *For the true beginning of her is the desire of discipline, and the care of discipline is love; and love is the keeping of her laws, and the giving heed unto her laws is the assurance of incorruption, and incorruption maketh us dear to God: therefore the desire of wisdom bringeth to a kingdom* (Wisd. vi. 17-20).

We need to keep ever before us that our study of sacred things is not to be pursued as an end in itself, the mere acquiring of knowledge, but such knowledge as will give us a greater love for God and a burning desire for eternal things. And this is only possible by the *bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ* (2 Cor. x. 5), by becoming disciples indeed, filled with that reverence and humility which, emptying the soul of self, inclines our ear to hear the words of our Divine Master. All this implies rectitude of life, the seeking of that purity of heart and singleness of eye which alone makes possible the vision of God. *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon thy holy hill? Even he, that leadeth an uncorrupt life; and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart* (Ps. xv. 1-2). Yet it should not be thought that our active seeking after God in meditation and prayer is to be postponed until after we have attained to a complete purification from sin and an entire mastery over our passions, for it is by seeking first the Kingdom of God that all these things are added unto us. *It is a great grace from God to practise self-examination, but too much is as bad as too little, as they say; believe me, by God's help we shall advance more by contemplating his divinity than by keeping our eyes fixed on ourselves* (St. Teresa, Interior Castle I. ii. 9). And our English Benedictine, Fr. Baker, says that souls recently converted ought *not to dwell long upon the exercises that concern remorse for sin, or on other matters of fear, as death, judgment, and hell, but rather to fix upon affections contrary to their present disposition . . . such acts are more beneficial to the soul and more acceptable to God* (Holy Wisdom III. ii. 10).

For *the truth shall make you free* (St. John viii. 23), and it is above all the desire for God, nourished in prayer, which makes all other desires appear in their true light, reveals the malice and foolishness of sin, the emptiness of creatures, and ever more and more captivates the soul with the vision of the *king in his beauty and the land stretching very far off* (Isa. xxxiii. 17).

PART II

THE GOD TO WHOM WE RETURN

NOTE

So far we have thought of some of the necessary conditions in seeking that knowledge of God which is eternal life. We shall now consider in what that knowledge consists, what we can actually know of God by the aid of reason and faith, reinforced by Divine grace. To do this as briefly as our space allows is not an easy task, and readers should realise that what is offered in the following pages is no more than the scantiest résumé of the subjects treated, mere suggestive material which requires thought and prayer to produce its fruit. *The thing known*, teaches St. Thomas, *is in the knower according to the mode, or capacity, of the knower.* It is not simply what we read, but what we bring to our reading, that matters.

FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT

The human mind is incapable of comprehending wholes at one glance; it only arrives at a knowledge of things by a process of dissection and analysis, the taking of things to pieces, the studying of each in detail, and then the reassembling of the parts into the whole again. Only by this process of composition, division, and reasoning are we able to arrive at some completeness of knowledge.

It is not surprising, then, that we can only gain some conception of what God is by a twofold way: first, of considering what he is not, for as St. Thomas says, following the teaching of the great Fathers and Doctors of the Church, *what he is not is clearer to us than what he is* (Summa Theol., I. i. 9); second, by considering what are called the attributes of God, which are the qualities or perfections we ascribe to him. But in taking this second way we have to guard against the idea that God is the sum total of the excellencies we ascribe to him, that these attributes, all added together, make up God in something the same way that we think of certain qualities making up a good man. For *God is Spirit* (St. John iv. 24), and his attributes or perfections are not part of but are himself; not accidental qualities joined together in him, but only our way of thinking of him as this or that, as Eternal, Infinite, Immutable, etc. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as Eternity or Omnipotence or Omnipresence; there is only a Being who is Eternal, Omnipotent, Omnipresent.

In God to be is the same as to be strong, or to be just, or to be wise, or whatever is said of that multifold simplicity (St. Aug., De Trinitate vi. 4). *His greatness is the same as his wisdom: for he is not great by bulk, but by power: and his goodness is the same as his wisdom and greatness, and his truth the same as all those things* (*ibid.* vi. 8).

It is only in thought that we thus contemplate this or that side of God, as it were; in reality God is One and Indivisible. We can worship God as he is, just as we can see and enjoy a beautiful scene, a picture, the one light of the sun, or listen to a great symphony. But just as when we want to study these things in order to gain a better appreciation of them we have to take them to pieces, directing our thought now to one aspect, now to another, so when we think of God. We are only able to get some grasp of the meaning of the words " God is Eternal," or " God is Infinite," by concentrating upon these particular aspects of his Being; but we must remember that this is only a process in our minds, not any limitation in God, who is Eternal, Infinite, etc.

I am that I am (Exod. iii. 14) is God's definition of himself, and conveys the truth that God exists of himself, that he is his own Existence, Being, and Essence, entirely distinct from, above, and other than creatures. God *is* Being, creatures *have* being; God is Uncreated, creatures the work of his hands. God exists of himself, creatures by his power and will; God is the Supreme Being, the Supreme Reality from whom the whole of creation derives the being and reality it possesses. God *is,* as he has ever been, and will for ever be, even though all created things were to come to an end. *In this one word you sum up all that God is when you say of him that he is. For abiding in itself, that Divine Nature is whatever it has, and is what it is eternally and unchangeably. What is God? That without which nothing is. He from whom and by whom and in whom are all things* (Rom. xi. 36). *What is God? With regard to the universe, he is its first beginning and its last* *end; with regard to his elect, he is their salvation; but as to what he is to himself, he alone knows that. What is God? Omnipotent Will, Benevolent Power, Eternal Light, Unchangeable Reason, Sovereign Beatitude, he who creates finite minds to participate in his bliss, who quickens their sensibility so that they may feel him, who attracts their will so that they may desire him, who expands their hearts so that they may have room to contain him, who justifies them so that they may merit him, who makes them walk in the way of wisdom, who strengthens them in virtue, visits them in consolation, enlightens them with the knowledge of truth, preserves them unto everlasting life, fills them with happiness, surrounds them with peace and security* (St. Bernard, De Consideratione).

SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT

Magnificence is not classed among the Attributes of God, but, as St. Thomas says, it belongs to Divine power. *His magnificence and his power are in the clouds* (Ps. lxviii. 34, Vulg.), and it is impossible to think of God without the idea of magnificence coming into the mind, for the word sums up all of that greatness, majesty, glory, splendour, and grandeur, that superabundant overflowing and encompassing liberality which is his very Life and is reflected in all his works.

Yet it is difficult for us who live in a tawdry, cheap age of shoddy meanness to realise something of what magnificence implies. Perhaps the nearest the world ever got to it was at the height of the Renaissance, when men created a splendour, not merely of outward things, a pageant of rich beauty and grandeur, but of the mind, aspiring to grasp the infinite, to embrace all things, and to adequately express itself in an ordered balance combined with an apparent wastefulness. That age can never die, nor does it seem likely to be repeated, for it was not merely the product of philosophy or wealth or science, but a dim reflection of the magnificence of God, too strong, alas! for human nature to bear. The stage of earth was too small to contain and reproduce the vision of heaven.

The magnificence of God in himself, in that Uncreated Life distinct from and anterior to all creation, which adds nothing to him nor changes him in any way, the Eternal, Unbeginning, Unending Life of the Adorable Trinity, before which the Church prostrates herself and repeats, *O Beata Trinitas*.

The magnificence of God in his works; the immense, beautiful, diverse, apparent wastefulness of creation; the overflowing of the merciful liberality of him whom Holy Scripture constantly describes as rich in all his works. Our own country is almost too tidy, too marked by man to give that vivid impression of magnificent beauty which seizes one as in the early morning one sees the outstretched semicircle of snow-capped Himalayas, tinged coral by the rising sun, rising above the foothills still swathed in mist; or as one wanders from lake to lake amidst the unspoilt forests of Western Canada on a day of early spring, when all Nature is stirring into life; or stands beneath the great pines on a mountain-side in Luzon and, looking downward through a tangled mass of tropical vegetation, sees three thousand feet below the shimmering, pale green rice terraces hanging precariously above a roaring torrent scouring its way down the cañon to the sea.

It is in such moments that one gains some idea of what magnificence means, and of the truth that all this beauty of created things exists, not primarily for man, but for God, *for whose pleasure all things were and are created.*

Yet we have but touched in the visible creation the outermost fringe of the magnificence of God. Need to rise to the serried ranks of the ninefold choirs of angelic spirits, to contemplate the glory of their Queen *full of grace,* to gaze in deepest adoration upon the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, *in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily* (Col. ii. 9), to let our minds try and realise something of all that Divine Life flowing through his Mystical Body, the Church, exhibited in a thousand diverse forms, and not least in his Saints, living monstrances of our magnificent God.

Magnificence, in a word, marks all that God is and does, and we should do well at times just to kneel quietly and think of that glory out of which we came, to which we belong, to which we owe all we are, for which we were created, and which we have been eternally destined to live in, to possess, and to enjoy. Need, too, at times to renew our sense of awe and reverence in the spirit of holy fear, to see that we do not stroll about in the courts of heaven as unthinking and unappreciative tourists in some prayer-hallowed shrine, but bear ourselves as acolytes imbued with something of the spirit of those pure spirits who surround the throne of God and minister at his footstool. *My God, how wonderful thou art! Deus meus et Omnia.*

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

In all our thinking about God we have constantly to remind ourselves that the terms we use of him are never more than analogous: they can never be used in exactly the same sense about God as they are about creatures. We can only know God as he is reflected in creatures, which are in some way like God; but this does not mean that God is like creatures, for he is altogether "other" and distinct from all his works, *more distant from creatures than any creatures are from each other* (Summa Theol., I. xiii. 5). It is this truth that we express by the term "the Simplicity of God," by which we mean that God is undivided and indivisible, without body, parts, or passions, containing in himself the fulness of being in a perfection which is incapable of change, addition, or diminution (Ecclus. xlii. 21). All created beings are composite, made up of parts, in them essence, that which makes a thing what it is, is something apart from existence, that can be more or less, exist even when divided or separated from one or more of their parts. But God is pure Spirit, essence, and existence in one, absolutely simple being, Pure Act, fullest and most perfect realisation of himself without any potentiality—*i.e.*, the possibility of being any more perfect than he is. *For in him to be and to live differ not, as if he might have being without life; neither to live and to understand, as if he could have life without intellect, nor to understand and be happy, as if he could have the one and not the other. But his life, his understanding, and his beatitude are all his being. From this immutable simplicity they learn that he made all these things and that he himself was made of none* (St. Aug., De Civit. Dei viii. 6).

The importance of this truth lies in the fact that it preserves the essential "otherness" of God, not allowing him to be identified with created things as if they were part of him, or as conceiving of God as a being in process of becoming, dependent in some way upon creatures for his full perfection, or that God is inside the world, as it were, evolving with it "the Harmony of Epochal occasions," each of which "introduces God into the world," as Professor Whitehead says ("Religion in the Making"). It protects God's Self-existent and Self-subsistent, independent, immutable being, who is neither determined nor limited by anything outside himself, to whom creatures are not necessary, although he is necessary to them.

Further, the Simplicity of God is demanded by the fact that he is Love and desires our love, for love implies distinctness from the world. *Ye cannot serve God and mammon* (St. Matt. vi. 24). If God and the world are one, then love of God means love of the world, whereas the Apostle says: *Love not* *the world, neither the things that are in the world . . . for all that is in the world is not of the Father, but is of the world* (1 St. John ii. 15, 16). *Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart,* etc. All our love is to be given to him who alone is good, God who is alone Infinite Goodness himself. *There is none good but one, that is, God* (St. Matt. xix. 17).

Belief in the Simplicity, the Uniqueness of God is necessary to any real, dynamic faith in and worship of him. A God who was in any way identifiable with creatures would not be the Abiding, Eternal Being in whom alone our frailty and changeableness could put any trust or confidence, for he would pass with this world, which both revelation and science assure will pass away and come to an end. Only before such a God as the Faith reveals, altogether simple, distinct, unique, other, beyond, and above the passing and temporal, may we creatures of time fall in adoration and love, perceiving ever more clearly all that it means to be creatures and rejoicing in our utter and complete dependence on the God of our life, *with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning* (St. Jas. i. 17), *the living God and stedfast for ever* (Dan. vi. 26).

MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect (St. Matt. v. 48). Since our Lord proposes no other perfection for our imitation than that of God himself, the consideration of that perfection becomes more than a theological study; it is a practical question affecting the whole development of our spiritual life. To attain, so far as is possible to the creature, to the perfection of the Creator, *to imitate the interior life of God* (St. Ignatius Loyola), is the end and purpose of our being, only possible, first, by some knowledge of in what it consists, and, second, by the grace of God which enables us to become that which is totally outside the reach of our nature in itself. *We call that perfect which lacks nothing of the mode of its perfection* (Summa Theol., I. iv. 1)—*i.e.*, a thing is perfect in so far as it possesses being and all the particular qualities which go to make up its perfection, in the degree in which it conforms to all that it is possible for it to be. In created things this perfection is always relative; we call a thing perfect not absolutely in itself, but as being the nearest of its kind to a certain idea or standard of perfection. But in God, who is Necessary Being, who must and does exist of himself, in whom are all created perfections, *not that he is this but not that, but that he is all, as the cause of all, for he is both the central Force of all things, and also their final Purpose, and is himself before them all, and they all subsist in him* (Dion., Div. Nom. i. 5); perfection is absolute, for he *contains in himself the whole perfection of being* (Summa Theol., I. iv. 2). *Moreover, the title "Perfect" means that he cannot be increased (being eternally perfect) and cannot be diminished, and that he contains all things beforehand in himself, overflowing in one ceaseless, eternal, abundant, and inex-*

haustible supply, whereby he perfects all things and fills them with his own Perfection (Dion., Div. Nom. xiii.).

Such is the perfection of God in himself, a perfection which the creature can only share in in a relative and dependent manner, a perfection which is first of all a gift of God to man, making him a *partaker in the divine nature* (2 St. Pet. i. 4), and then an achievement of man whose imitation of God is made possible by the fact that he has been made the child of God. *Be ye imitators of God, as dear children* (Eph. v. 1). And both the grace of this participation and the possibility of the imitation of the invisible God are bestowed upon us in our Lord, *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person* (Heb. i. 3), *in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily* (Col. ii. 9). Jesus Christ could alone say, *Be ye perfect,* because he could also say, *He that hath seen me hath seen the Father* (St. John xiv. 9).

In our Lord we see our perfection, which consists in *the entire agreement of the creature with God so far as the creature is capable of it.* That perfection is of a twofold character: first, a perfection by nature, in that our Lord is the Only-Begotten Son of God in a singular and unique sense; and, second, a perfection by grace, by which his human will was ever completely one with that of his Eternal Father. Our perfection, then, is to be as his, beginning in a participation, not by nature, but by grace, in the very life of God himself, a participation by which we are made by grace what our Lord is by nature—the sons of God (St. John i. 12)—and completed by our realisation of the fact that *now are we the children of God* (1 St. John iii. 2) and our willing correspondence with the fact by which ever more and more our minds and hearts and wills are conformed to the *image of him who created us* (Col. iii. 10), as, in virtue of our being *in Christ,* we *attempt an humble, creaturely imitation of the Eternal, Spaceless Creator under the deliberately accepted conditions of space and time* (Von Hügel).

TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT

O taste and see that the Lord is good (Ps. xxxiv. 9); *The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord* (Ps. xxxiii. 6). To be good, says St. Thomas, belongs pre-eminently to God, for *everything is called good according to its perfection* (Summa Theol., I. vi. 1, 3), and God, being Absolute Perfection in himself, is Supreme Goodness, for goodness is that aspect of being which makes it desirable. *The Trinity of the Divine Persons is the Supreme Good, discerned by purified minds,* says St. Augustine. The goodness of God does not depend upon creatures; it was not first of all evoked by them, but is inherent in his Being and one with it. Before Creation was the goodness and love of God already existed and had eternally communicated itself within the circle of the Divine Life. To say that God is Love is to declare the mystery of the Holy Trinity in which his love is ever operative, the love of the Father producing—to use an altogether inadequate word—his Only-Begotten Son, and the mutual love of the Father and the Son being the Holy Ghost. It is, then, in God himself that we are to first contemplate the Divine Goodness as altogether desirable in itself, apart from its further relation to created things. *O taste and see that the Lord is good,* not merely that he does good to us, but that he is good in himself and that he extends his goodness, not by any necessity, but because it is the property of goodness to communicate itself freely, by the very fact of his existence, unto all things. Dionysius compares the goodness of God to the sun giving light to the world, *for as our sun, through no choice or deliberation, but by the very fact of its existence, gives light to all those things which have any inherent power of receiving its illumination, even so the Good sends forth upon all things, according to their receptive powers, the rays of its Undivided Goodness. . . . Their rest is in the Divine Goodness, wherein they are grounded, and this Goodness maintains and protects them and feasts them with its good things* (Div. Nom. iv. 1).

By his goodness God has made himself desirable by man. As Goodness draweth all things to himself, is the *Attractive Power which unites all things which are sundered* (Dion., Div. Nom. iv. 4), giving to man that natural and instinctive desire for perfection which, however wrongly he may conceive it to exist and to seek it in anything less than God, is in itself the desire for God himself. We know that we are incomplete, half-beings, as it were, who must find our fulness and our happiness in something outside ourselves. And all our sin and failure comes from our seeking in the imperfect and dependent good of creatures that Perfect Good who is God alone and who alone can satisfy the thirst he has himself created in our hearts. *The earth, O Lord, is full of thy goodness* (Ps. cxix. 64), but it is God himself who is the goodness of the rational creature, whom he has made a capacity to be filled with all the fulness of his own Divine Life. And that Goodness which is himself is most plainly to be tasted and seen in the Person of his Incarnate Word, in whom he has shown *the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Jesus Christ* (Eph. ii. 7). For *in this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him* (1 St. John iv. 9), live in and by him who is our goodness, and who wills not only to communicate his goodness to us, but to diffuse it through us. *I am the light of the world* (St. John viii. 12); *Ye are the light of the world* (St. Matt. v. 14).

Dull nothingness, possessing no light or goodness of our own, we are like lamp-posts in the busy haunts of men, things of no beauty and rather in the way until the Divine Light of Supreme Goodness shines within us and the wayfarer by night is gladdened and brought on his journey by the True Light kindled in the lives of those who have tasted and seen that the *Lord is good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him* (Lam. iii. 25).

WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT

One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require: even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord (Ps. xxvii. 4), *for how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!* (Zech. ix. 17).

Beauty and Goodness are the same, goodness being what all men desire, and beauty that which pleases when perceived, not merely as being seen with the eyes, but comprehended by the mind. Beauty is the result of three things—perfection, proportion or harmony, and clearness or brilliancy. We call that beautiful which has a certain greatness and completeness, which satisfies the mind because of its fulness, which is a rich combination of variety in unity, all its parts co-ordinated and forming an harmonious whole, which possesses a clearness and a vivid appeal, awakening admiration and appreciation. It is these conditions which, found in Nature and Art, betoken not only the Divine Artist behind all things, but also his surpassing beauty in himself. *For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionably the Maker of them is seen* (Wisd. xiii. 5). St. John of the Cross sings of the wondrous beauty of creatures and of the mysteries of the Faith in the fifth stanza of " A Spiritual Canticle "—

" A thousand graces diffusing,
He passed the groves in haste,
And, merely regarding them
As he passed,
Clothed them with his beauty."

All creatures are, he says, *traces of the passage of God,* manifesting his attributes. The lower creation he passed in haste; he made it, as it were, in passing, for all was in view of his greatest works *wherein he is most visible and at rest,* the Incarnation and its attendant mysteries, which he *clothed with his beauty. God saw everything which he had made, and behold, it was very good* (Gen. i. 13). To see all things very good was to make them very good in his Son, clothing them with the beauty and dignity of him *who, being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his substance* (Heb. i. 3), most perfectly both represents and bestows upon the soul the beauty of God.

But other words come to our mind: *He hath no form or comeliness: and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him* (Isa. liii. 2). The beauty of our Crucified God may only be discerned by the mind purified and enlightened by faith and charity. To the natural man the crucifix is crude and horrible, to the Christian it is the most beautiful sight below that of God himself in the beatific vision. Nothing so betrays the real depths of the soul as our attitude towards the Passion. For the perception of the beauty of Jesus crucified is the truest comprehension of Goodness and the surest revelation of that true love of beauty, moved not by the desire to possess it for oneself, but simply to *delight in the Lord* for his own dear sake.

The soul becomes beautiful, *all glorious within,* not by snatching at beauty, plucking the flower in order to possess it, for so we kill the things we love, but by loving the Eternal Beauty for himself and so becoming more and more freed from that love of the passing beauty of creatures, which only serves to obscure rather than to reveal the beauty of the Creator. Glimpsing the beauty of earth—we must appreciate it as the faint reflection of the beauty of God—how much more beautiful, we cry, must be the sight of him from whom such beauty proceeds! *Too late loved I thee, O thou Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new, too late I loved thee . . . things held me far from thee, which, unless they were in thee, were not at all. . . . The eyes loved fair and varied forms, and bright and soft colours. Let not these occupy my soul; let God rather occupy it, who made these things very good indeed, yet is he my good, not they* (St. Aug., Conf. x.).

THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT

The infinity of God is a necessary part of his perfection, which consists in his full possession of being in himself so that he cannot lack anything which pertains to the perfection of being. Creatures are limited by their very nature, which is ever in dependence upon something else, by their capacity which restricts their power of being anything else than their particular nature permits, by a thousand things with which they are surrounded, by the facts of time and space, of their composite being, etc. But God, since he is Self-Existent Being, Pure Spirit, Uncaused First Cause of all things, is not limited or conditioned by anything outside of himself; he is independent in the fullest sense of the word, perfectly free, infinite in life, in power, in knowledge, in will, in love, in mercy, and in all that he is, possessing that *perfect freedom* which, teaches St. Thomas, *consists in the free and joyous expression of a perfect nature. O Israel, how great is the house of God! and how large is the place of his possession! Great and hath none end; high and immeasurable* (Bar. iii. 24).

The ways of God are not our ways (Isa. lv. 8); we can never argue that because we should act in this or that manner God will do so, and it is one of the ways of God to reveal himself in what often seem to us to be the opposite of the perfections we ascribe to him. This is the case with his infinity, for the most perfect revelation of his infinite power and love, of his Nature and Being, his entire freedom, is seen in the Incarnation, in which he voluntarily submits himself to the limitations of our nature, Infinite God, *whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain* (2 Chron. ii. 6), subject to the conditions of our finite time and space, dependent upon his creature, bound by his own immutable laws. And why? Because he wills to confer upon man such a share in his infinite life as it is possible for the creature to receive, to bestow upon us *the glorious liberty of the children of God* (Rom. viii. 21), *that we may stand fast in the freedom whereby Christ has made us free* (Gal. v. 1). God himself has shown us that alone *the truth can make us free* (St. John viii. 32), and that this freedom comes not from refusing the limitations imposed upon us, but by accepting them. Freedom is not to be found in licence, in the attempt to escape from natural or Divine laws, but in obedience to them. The man who seeks to be free from any law but that of his own will, who aspires to be "independent" as God alone can be, only comes to slavery, tied and bound to self and creatures lower than himself. For the truth of man is that he is for ever a servant, free, indeed, to choose whom he will serve, but not free not to serve at all. So the Infinite Creator *took upon himself the form of a servant* (Phil. ii. 7), that, *the first-born among many brethren* (Rom. viii. 29), he might deliver them from the bondage of sin and death, conferring upon them a share in his own eternal, limitless life through Jesus Christ. *If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed* (St. John viii. 36).

Adorable Freedom of God in the Supreme Perfection of his Infinite Life! Adorable and Imitable Freedom of God in his Son, Jesus Christ! Glorious liberty of the children of God, freed from the slavery of sin, of the passions, of creatures, made in Christ, kings and priests unto God! Freedom from self, the supreme tyranny, by death to self, by the way of the Cross, which leads to life. Adorable Freedom of the soul risen with Christ, *a new creature,* already sharing in the infinite life and joy of the blessed in heaven!

FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT

It has been necessary to insist upon the truth of God's distinctness and "otherness" from all creatures because this is so often denied and because it is necessary to any true conception of the nature and being of God. But we must not fall into the error of thinking that this implies an aloofness of God from creatures, as if, having created the world, he had left it to its own devices, retiring to a solitary splendour of his own. God is transcendent, above and other than the works of his hands and in no way dependent upon them; but he is also immanent in all his creatures. *In him we live and move and have our being* (Acts xvii. 28). God is omnipresent, he is in all things and all things are in him, for as St. Thomas says: *Although corporal things are said to be in anything as in that which contains them, nevertheless spiritual things contain those things in which they are, as the soul contains the body. Hence also God is in things as containing them; yet by a certain similitude to corporal things, it is said that all things are in God; inasmuch as they are contained by him* (Summa Theol., I. viii. 1).

God is in all things that he has created, not as part of them, but as their Creator, whose wisdom made them all (Ps. civ. 24), as the Will which controls and governs all (Ecclus. xxxix. 15), and as the Power which preserves all in being (Neh. ix. 6).

By thy wisdom hast thou made them all. The knowledge of God is the cause of things, says St.

Thomas, as the knowledge, the idea in the mind of the artist, is the cause of his work and makes him to be in it. To have an idea in itself does not necessarily imply, in man, the capacity to put it into execution. But the more capacity there is, the more the man himself is in his work; we frequently say "he has put his whole self into it." In God, idea and capacity are one; all his works exist in his Mind as ideas, translated into being by the Divine Wisdom which planned them, and in which he is, though ever distinct from, as the artist is in the work he has created, though not part of it or contained by it.

But, further, God is in all things by his will, which, having fashioned them for his own glory (Apoc. iv. 11), for ever directs them toward the end of their being, causing in all the desire, rational or instinctive or as moved by another, to seek that end. For even inanimate bodies, says St. Thomas, *tend to an end as directed by an intelligent substance: in the same way as an arrow, directed by an archer, tends to the mark* (Contra Gent. III. xxiv.). So, too, he is in all things by his Power, which gives to created things all the reality they possess in varying degrees, not merely giving existence, but sustaining it in them so that all things depend upon God and are related to him as the rays of the sun are dependent upon and related to the sun. Not that God acts as from a distance upon creatures, but by his Presence within them, since he *is in all things* and *acts immediately in all things, so that nothing is distant from him as if it could be without God in itself* (Summa Theol., I. viii. 1). *As the production of a thing into existence depends on the Will of*

God, so likewise it depends on his Will that things should be preserved; for he does not preserve them otherwise than by giving them existence; hence if he took away his action from them, all things would be reduced to nothing (Summa Theol., I. ix. 2).

All this reason teaches so that surely *vain are all men by nature who are ignorant of God and could not out of the good things that are seen know him that is: neither by considering the works did they acknowledge the work-master* (Wisd. xiii. 1). But revelation tells us of an even more intimate presence of God than that of which we have spoken, a presence of the Most Holy Trinity in the soul of the just, that presence by Grace *which constitutes a singular mode of God's existence in things* (Sum. Theol., I. viii. 3). *Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* (1 Cor. iii. 16). Has not our Lord said, *If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him* (St. John xiv. 23)? *Reality is God dwelling in you. Make spontaneous, explicit, and frequent acts of faith in this real and constant presence of God within you. Seek him within you, for there he dwells, calling you, expecting you, and grieving because of your forgetfulness* (Mercier).

SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT

I am the Lord, I change not (Mal. iii. 6). God is the Immutable, Changeless, and Unchanging Being, *with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning* (St. Jas. i. 12). *In thee abide, fixed for ever, the First Cause of all things unabiding; and of all things changeable the origin abides in thee unchangeable: and in thee lives eternally the reasons of all things unreasoning and temporal. . . . O most High, most Good, most Powerful, most Almighty, stable yet incomprehensible; never new and never old; ever in act yet ever at rest; thou lovest, without passion; art jealous, without uneasiness; repentest, yet grievest not; changest thy works, thy purpose unchanged; recoverest what thou findest, yet didst never lose; art never in need, yet art gladdened by gains* (St. Aug., Conf.).

Change implies imperfection, a becoming better or worse, a potentiality to be something more or less, all of which is impossible with God, who is Pure Act, all-perfect and complete in himself, Supreme Being, possessing all that is desirable to an infinite degree. No act of God outside himself—as, for instance, Creation—causes any change in him, the secret force of all created things; he is himself unmoved, all motion's source. All things outside of God are changeful and changing. *Change and decay in all around I see.* The world of temporal passing things is not an illusion; it possesses a reality, although but a dependent reality; it may be compared with Immutable Being as a great river ever rushing onward in constant change, while in its midst stand great, unchangeable, enduring rocks, around which the waves of the world change and vicissitudes sweep without ever altering their contour or affecting their stability. So Holy Scripture applies to God such symbolic and analogic terms as Rock, Stronghold, Refuge, Haven, to express his unmoved, stable, unchanging immutability.

That immutable, eternal Life of God is revealed to us in the Person of his Incarnate Son, of one Substance with the Father. In Jesus Christ we see unchanging God in a changing, human form, a body subject to the effects of passing things, knowing and experiencing all the movements of our nature. Yet one of the most characteristic notes of our Lord's Life is the calm, ordered, peaceful, balanced attitude in which he views, experiences, and passes through our world of change and vicissitude. It is not the calm of the Stoic, an affected superiority over passing things, a proud aloofness from the common ways of life, but the calm peace of a life rooted in, living in, dependent upon something outside and above, greater and more enduring than the things of time. It is the calm proceeding from a mind and will founded and rooted in the Immutable Will of God, one with the Divine thought and purpose for ever untouched and unmoved by the changeful currents of temporal things. *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me* (St. John iv. 34). God's will is identical with his Being and Life, and it is that very Life of God which moves visibly amongst men in the Person of our Lord, sharing in and yet unchanged by the life of creatures, to whom it is not only manifested but given. *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God* (St. John i. 12). By virtue of his sonship the Christian shares in the unchanging Life of God, by the gift of that Life he has been raised to the supernatural order—*your life is hid with Christ in God* (Col. iii. 3)—he has been made a citizen of the Kingdom of enduring reality (Eph. ii. 19; Phil. iii. 20). He cannot, he is not meant to escape from the changing conditions of the present, but he is meant to live securely in God, to abide and rest in the Unchanging Life, which is both his life and his model. Drawing life from Jesus, who is his life, he will ever seek from him the grace of an unchangeable adherence to him, ever anchor his will more firmly in the Divine Will, that so, as a ship rides out the storm, he may pass safely through all the waves of this troublesome life and, in Christ, come to the haven where he would be.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

See now that I am he, and there is no god beside me . . . I live for ever (Deut. xxxii. 39, 40). Eternity is nothing else but God himself, for of God alone can it be said that he has *the whole and perfect simultaneous possession of interminable life* (Boethius). *As God is supremely immutable, it belongs to him to be supremely eternal. Nor is he eternal only; but he is his own Eternity . . . as he is his own Essence*

(Summa Theol., I. x. 2). In trying to conceive some idea of Eternity we have to begin by setting aside all idea of time, of succession, of past, present, and future, of all that duration, flux, and change, of passing from one moment to another which is the condition of our present life. To say that God is Eternal means that he is outside all this, that in him there is no potentiality, no possibility of beginning, end, change, becoming, or succession. The idea of Eternity consists in *the apprehension of the uniformity outside time . . . in the now standing still* (Summa Theol., I. x. 1, 2) of God, who *fashions things changeable, yet without any change in himself; and creates things temporal, yet without any temporal movement in himself* (St. Aug., De Trin. i. 3). In God, past, present, and future exist in a simultaneous act, in the Now which is as the immovable to the movable. *One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* (2 St. Pet. iii. 8). And this simultaneous and perfect possession of Life and Knowledge, in which all that ever has been or will be is seen and known in an abiding motionless present, is no mere static state, but the whole and perfect simultaneous possession of interminable *life,* of supreme activity, of pure energy in its most perfect form.

In eternity is stability, but in time variety: in eternity all things stand still, in time one thing comes, another succeeds (St. Augustine). Here is the secret of our confidence, our patience, our repose. In the midst of passing things, carried along on the rushing whirl of time, which subjects all things to its resistless domination, we fall back upon the truth, *The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms* (Deut. xxxiii. 27). We see ourselves as citizens of the eternal, supernatural order which time cannot touch or destroy, are conscious of a life within which is not subject to its limitations, of powers which exceed its boundaries. Eternal life is no mere hope of the future, but an abiding fact of the present, a possession in the midst of time. *This is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent* (St. John xvii. 3). For this very purpose was the Eternal Son sent into our world, *that we might live by him* (St. John iv. 9). *The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom. vi. 23). The Christian life is nothing less than the continuation of the life of Christ in us, that Eternal Life which was with the Father and cometh down into the world. *For man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God* (St. Matt. iv. 4); much more, then, by him who is the Eternal Word, unto whom it is said: *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever* (Heb. i. 8); *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever* (Heb. xiii. 8).

It is in the light of eternity that we are to see the things of time, and so to see them clearly, appreciate them justly, and use them rightly. So long as we allow ourselves to be immersed in them, so long is our sight blinded, our judgment obscured, our use but misuse. It is only when we disentangle ourselves from creatures, when we get out of and above them into the clear light of eternal reality that we are able to see them as they are, judge of their real worth, use them as means towards our End. No less is this true of ourselves: it is only possible for us to gain a true self-knowledge *in the light in which we see light* (Ps. xxxvi. 9).

In turning toward Eternal God alone may we perceive the nothingness that we are and learn that so he has created us in order that we might *be filled with all the fulness of God* (Eph. iii. 19). Child of Eternity, loved with an everlasting love (Jer. xxxi. 3), let passing things pass, fix thy eyes upon the Eternal Beauty, cast thyself upon the Eternal Strength, dwell in the Eternal Life, rejoice in the Eternal Wisdom and Love, so shalt thou come to that Eternal Beatitude which is God himself.

MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God (Deut. vi. 4). All that has been said about the perfections of God establishes this truth of his unity which it was the special vocation of Israel to guard and proclaim, and which the Catholic Church jealously holds whilst maintaining that it exists in Three Divine Persons, One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. God is supremely one because he is supreme Being, for *one means undivided being* (Summa Theol., I. xi. 1). He is not simply the only God, but one in that in him essence and existence, nature and being, together with all those perfections which necessarily follow from his being, are all one; not a compound of qualities and excellencies, as it were, but simply God himself. Moreover, he is one as the Source and Principle of all unity in creation, a unity which we perceive to exist in which all things are ordered to each other and designed to one final end. *Wherefore, in almost all consideration of Divine things we see the Supreme Godhead celebrated with holy praises as One and an Unity, through the simplicity and unity of its supernatural indivisibility, from whence (as from a unifying power) we attain to unity* (Dion., Div. Nom. i.).

The Unity of God, then, is more than a theological and metaphysical necessity; it touches, and that because it is the very Life of God, our life at every point. Two examples of this must suffice. First, it forbids the putting of any creature in the place of God. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve* (St. Matt. iv. 10). Idols of wood and stone we are not likely to worship and serve, but idols of the mind, of creatures, of self—these we are ever in danger of making our gods. But *no man can serve two masters* (St. Matt. vi. 24). All our life is mixed up with creatures, in more or less degree according to our vocation; we are bound to use creatures as means by which we attain our End, but all our life, too, consists in a continuous detachment from creatures, the refusal to be entangled in them, that *love may be at liberty and free from all worldly affection that its interior vision be not hindered* (Imitation iii. 5). *For this is the work of a perfect man, never to let the mind slacken from attending to heavenly things, and amidst many cares to pass on, as it were, without care; not after* *the manner of an indolent person, but by a certain privilege of a detached mind, not cleaving with inordinate affection to anything created* (Imitation iii. 26).

Second, the Divine Unity, which is the *mould of all things* (St. Aug., Conf. I. vii.), is the model to which our life is to be conformed, being brought into the image of him who created it. Our weakness is due to the disunity of our nature, flesh warring against spirit, reason, imagination, will, the passions all at variance, the whole self torn and consumed by innumerable desires. It is the re-establishment of order within our being that we need, that order which is the right relation of things to their end, and of which the result is peace, for *peace is the tranquillity of order* (St. Aug., De Civit. Dei lxix. 13). *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee* (Isa. xxvi. 3). For to have our minds stayed in God, *who is our Peace* (Eph. ii. 14), is to bring ourselves into that Unity wherein all the scattered factors of our being shall be directed to one End, to him who is the *Principle of Unity to them that are being brought into unity* (Dion., Div. Nom. i. 3) and the *Good who imparts a principle of harmony to all things and is called by the sacred writers Peace and the Bestower of Peace* (Dion., Div. Nom. iv. 21).

TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts (Isa. vi. 3). There is hardly any attribute of God so often mentioned and praised in the Bible as his holiness, in which term is expressed the distinctness and otherness of God from all creatures, *the Lord high and lifted up* (Isa. vi. 1), who proclaims, *I am the Lord and not man, and my glory I will not give to another* (Isa. xliii. 8), to whom alone may the threefold anthem of heaven and earth be raised. God is holy, too, in the intense Purity of his Perfect Being and Life, in which is no imperfection or blemish, no lack or stain, in whose sight *even the heavens are not clean* (Job xv. 15), *whose eyes are purer than to behold iniquity* (Hab. i. 13). And holy in the possession of all good, all virtue, all perfection, holy in all that he is and does, *the Lord is holy in all his works* (Ps. cxlv. 17). *Heaven and earth are full of thy glory* (Isa. vi. 3). If it is possible so to say, holiness would seem to be that attribute upon which God centres his regard, for he has made it the foundation and pledge of his promises—*My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David* (Ps. lxxxix. 34, 35). *The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness* (Amos. iv. 2); and, moreover, it is holiness above all that he demands of his creatures—*Be ye holy, for I am holy* Lev. xi. 44). God hath chosen us in Christ *before* *the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love* (Eph. i. 4), has called us *a holy nation* (1 St. Pet. ii. 9), *a holy priesthood* (1 St. Pet. ii. 5), *to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord* (2 Cor. vii. 1), *to be partakers of his holiness* (Heb. xii. 10), *without which no man shall see the Lord* (Heb. xii. 14). *O soul, living image of God,* cries B. Grignion de Montfort, *redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ, the will of God for you is that you become holy as he is in this life and glorious as he is in the other.*

Holiness is a gift and an achievement, achievement only because a gift. Not by any works of ours, by any series of moral efforts, may we attain to holiness of life; *their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord* (Isa. liv. 17); *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us* (St. Tit. iii. 5). Only by the Divine gift by which we are made partakers of the very holiness of God himself may we *perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord* by daily conforming ourselves to the likeness of Jesus, who has brought holiness to earth, manifested it in our human nature, and infuses the Spirit of holiness into our hearts. All the holiness of man lies in his union with Jesus Christ, the true Vine—*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me* (St. John xv. 4). The holiness of Mary is the holiness of Jesus living in and working through her; the holiness of the Saints is nothing but Jesus. True Light, shining through them, as the holiness of a church is due to his dwelling in the tabernacle, and our holiness to his intimate presence in our souls, for *the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are* (1 Cor. iii. 17).

Thus our holiness can only consist in an entire love of and adherence to God and a separation from and hatred of all that is opposed to his holiness. *My son, be mindful of the Lord our God all thy days, and let not thy will be set to sin, or to transgress his commandments . . . for thou hast much wealth if thou fear God and depart from all sin, and do that which is pleasing in his sight* (Tobit iv. 5, 21). For so we prepare the way of the Lord, opening our hearts to receive him and allowing his Divine holiness to cleanse, heal, restore, illuminate, and transform our lives by uniting us ever more closely to himself. We cannot realise too much that our growth in holiness depends upon our yielding ourselves ever more and more to the influence of the Spirit of Jesus. *As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God* (Rom. viii. 14). By Baptism we have been made temples entirely consecrated to the Most Holy Trinity, holy shrines in which God desires to dwell, priests who are to *lift up holy hands of prayer* (1 St. Tim. ii. 8), *to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, a holy nation, that we show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light* (1 St. Pet. ii. 9), upon whom is inscribed the title *Holiness to the Lord* (Exod. xxviii. 36). It is our vocation to bear that title, that priestly character, that share in the Divine holiness, before God and man.

WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! (Rom. xi. 33); *With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and strength* (Job xii. 13). In God, as we have already said, all that is divided and multiplied in creatures exists simply and unitedly in one Perfect Act in which he knows and comprehends himself and all things in himself. *As God is said to be in himself, forasmuch as he is not contained in anything outside himself; so he is said to be comprehended by himself, forasmuch as nothing in himself is hidden from himself* (Summa Theol., I. xiv. 3). So also he knows all things outside himself, since his knowledge is the cause of all things, as St. Augustine says: *All creatures, spiritual and corporal, are not known by God because they are; but they are because he knows them. The Lord knoweth all that may be known* (Ecclus. xlii. 18), *neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do* (Heb. iv. 13). This knowledge, teaches St. Thomas in his "Summa Contra Gentiles," extends even to the smallest and most trivial things, *for the stronger an active power is, the further does its action extend. Now the force of the Divine intellect in knowing things is liked to an active power; since it knows, not by receiving from things, but rather by pouring itself into them. . . . Now the degree of nobility and meanness in all things* *depends on nearness to and distance from God . . . therefore God, on account of the exceeding power of his intellect, knows all things even though they be in the last degree trivial.*

And God knows all things, not as we know as past, present, or future, but in his Eternal, Abiding Now; he sees all things together at once. His knowledge is infinite and all-embracing; there are no after-thoughts, no additions to that knowledge. Each creature and each act of that creature is in the eternal knowledge of God. *Before I formed thee, I knew thee* (Jer. i. 5). *He hath chosen us before the foundation of the world* (Eph. i. 4), *loved us with an everlasting love* (Jer. xxxi. 3). Yet must we not think that this knowledge of all that we are and shall be destroys our freedom any more than our knowledge of what anyone else is and is doing affects their liberty of action. And in God there is no future; all is known to him as happening, as present in his Eternal Now.

God's knowledge of us is a knowledge of us as individuals, a personal knowledge, not only of all our human nature, but of each nature with its own individuality, psychology, characteristics. *In much knowledge the Lord hath divided them, and made their ways diverse* (Ecclus. xxxiii. 11); *I know my sheep, and am known of mine* (St. John x. 14); *He loved me and gave himself for me* (Gal. ii. 20). The Incarnation of the Eternal Word, the very Mind of God made flesh, brings home to us the personal, intimate knowledge God has of us, knowledge of One who has taken our nature, shared our lot, lived our life, known by a human experience all the vicissitudes of our being, has sounded all its depths, known its weariness no less than its repose, its fears no less than its hopes and joys; *in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren* (Heb. ii. 17), so that *we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with our infirmities* (Heb. iv. 15), but one who for ever knows because he has borne and bears the nature he made.

In him are all *the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col. ii. 3), that through him they might descend upon us. *Wisdom and knowledge are from the Lord* (Ecclus. xi. 15), and by these two highest gifts of the Spirit we are enabled to gain a true knowledge of created things and to know what we ought to believe, this being the function of the gift of knowledge, and to know the things we believe in themselves by a kind of union with them, an intuitive perception, a tasting and seeing, which belongs to the gift of wisdom. *Only in heaven shall we know even as we are known* (1 Cor. xiii. 12), but already we may enter upon that knowledge, which is eternal life, by the exercise of the gift of wisdom, which confers upon us *a sympathy or connaturality for divine things which is the result of charity uniting us to God* (Summa Theol., II. ii. xliii. 2). And this *wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good works* (St. Jas. iii. 17), a treasure unto men that never faileth, which they that use become the friends of God (Wisd. vii. 14).

THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

The Lord is the God of Truth (Jer. x. 10), *who keepeth truth for ever* (Ps. cxlvi. 6), *whose truth endureth to all generations* (Ps. c. 5). *Truth is found in the intellect according as it apprehends a thing as it is; and in things according as they have being conformable to the intellect. This is to the greatest degree found in God. His Being is not only conformed to his Intellect, but it is the very act of his Intellect itself; and this is the measure and cause of every other being and intellect. Whence it follows that not only is truth in him, but that he himself is Truth, and the Sovereign and First Truth* (Summa Theol., I. xvi. 5). *I am the Truth* (St. John xiv. 6). Here is the source of man's reverence and desire for truth, reverence and desire which exists however far a man may be from it, however little he regard it in himself. He may lie and deceive, but there is nothing that he hates more than to be deceived; he knows the value of truth even though his life be rooted in falsehood. For never can he wholly escape from the source and principle of his being, the Truth which created him, which gives his being all the reality it possesses, outside of which all is vanity, emptiness, falsehood, illusion, and servitude. For the *devil is the father of lies* (St. John viii. 44), and *his servants are ye to whom ye obey* (Rom. vi. 16). To lie is to depart from the truth—that is, from God; it is to deny God, who is Truth and who demands truth from his creatures. *Thou desirest truth in the inward parts* (Ps. li. 6). For the truth of the creature consists in his conformity to the Author of his being, in his likeness to Divine Truth himself.

Truth, then, is no mere abstract idea; it is God himself and all God revealed in Christ, who proclaims: *I am the Truth.* Truth, indeed, of God, whom alone he reveals to man, *for no man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, he hath declared him* (St. John i. 18). Truth of man, revealing human nature as God designed it to be in all its nothingness and in all its capacity *to be to the praise of his glory* (Eph. i. 12); Truth of all creation, revealing all the meaning of creatures and of life; *Truth who makes us free* (St. John viii. 32), *free from the law of sin and death* (Rom. viii. 2) by the understanding which he hath given us, *that we may know him that is true, and are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life* (1 St. John v. 20). Well does the Apostle add: *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.* For what is an idol but a lie, a non-being, the very opposite of the True and Living God?

However lacking we may be in truthfulness, not only in word, but, what is more common, in the whole attitude of our life, in which we are ever endeavouring to appear to be what we are not, let there at least be truth in our coming to God. This means that we must come to him as we are, stripping ourselves of that disguise and camouflage we wear so continually as we go about the world. For it is not what we are which bars our way to God, but the failure to come as we are, with frank and full acknowledgment of the truth about ourselves. We are always imagining in our pride that we can attire ourselves in a fitting state to come to God much in the same way as we put on our best clothes to go to church. But God sees not merely best or worst, but the Truth, just the thing that is, the beings we are, no more and no less except the desire we have to be what we are not. One moment of truthfulness in his sight would do more for us than the hours we think we spend before him, hours in which he knows us not, since it is not we who are there, but only poor actors of a part which is not ourselves. *Send forth, O Lord, thy light and thy truth, that they may lead me, and bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy dwelling* (Ps. xliii. 3).

" Thou God of Truth, for whom we long—
Thou who wilt hear our prayer—
Do thine own battle in our hearts,
And slay the falsehood there."

FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

We preach unto you . . . the living God (Acts xiv. 15). It was and is as the Living God that God is distinguished from all the gods of the heathen and from the gods created in the minds of men to-day. By the term " God " we do not mean that which men call the Absolute and Unknowable, the " power which makes for righteousness," a " stream of tendencies," the " Harmony of Epochal Occasions," the "Great Mathematician," or Dean Inge's God, who would have nothing to think about were the world to come to an end! But God who is *Someone,* not something, a distinct, personal, living, thinking, willing, loving Being, not an obscure blur, an indefinite vagueness like a Cubist picture. The Living God who is his own *living* and his own *life* . . . since to *live is the act of a living being* (Summa Contra Gent. I. xcviii.), of a being who possesses within himself that principle of activity and movement which constitutes life. As God is his own very Existence and Intellect, so is he his own Life (Summa Theol., I. xviii. 3), in whom all *things live, and move, and have their being* (Acts xvii. 28), for it is God *who giveth to all life, and breath, and all things* (*ibid.* 25).

The Life of God is as a vast, infinite, boundless reservoir of being, ever full and complete in itself, in the Perfection of that Divine and Eternal Act by which the Father knows and loves himself, and in that knowledge and love begets his Word, the Eternal Son, of one Substance with himself, and from whose mutual love proceeds the Holy Spirit, in whom is completed the circle of the Divine Life. And as a reservoir overflows of its fulness (though in God is no necessity to do so), so the Divine Life overflows, giving of itself, clothing itself in the garment of created things, of which it is ever the life and being. *Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind* (Job xii. 9, 10).

In the midst of life we are in death. It is the thought that so continually haunts us, the thought that all things pass and we with them, that, strive and struggle as we will, all ends in decay, in failure; our graves alone remain to stir a memory otherwise forgotten. No—far truer—in the midst of death we are in life, in the midst of passing things, of hurrying time, of things which endure but for a moment, having but the mere shadow of life; *our life is hid with Christ in God* (Col. iii. 3), Christ, who is our life, by whom *we shall reign in life* (Rom. v. 17). The Living God! What room for weakness, for discouragement, for faint-heartedness in him who believes this? *Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith* (1 St. John v. 4). It is our feeble hold upon, our little apprehension of, the Life which is and which we share which makes us tremble before the forces of evil, the fear of sin and death, the cold scorn and indifference of a world which lieth in darkness. *Sursum Corda, the Lord is King, be the people never so impatient: He sitteth between the cherubims, be the earth never so unquiet* (Ps. xcix. 1). Our great need, then, is to apprehend the supreme livingness of the Divine Life, to open our hearts to receive it more fully that its power may operate within us more powerfully and entirely. *For the truth is that the more anything participates in the One infinitely bountiful God, the more it is brought near to him and made diviner than the rest* (Dion., Div. Nom. v. 3). The Sacraments are the chief means by which the Divine Life is conveyed to our souls, for they are not only signs of Grace, *which constitutes a singular* *mode of God's existence in things* (Summa Theol., I. viii. 3), but efficacious signs, containing and conveying grace to us. St. Paul identifies grace with the life of God in Christ (Eph. ii. 5, 8; Rom. v. 10). Grace is therefore participation in the intimate life of God, designed to bring about in us a reflection and reproduction of the Life of the Most Holy Trinity itself. By Baptism we are *born of God* (St. John iii. 5), by Confirmation the Divine Life is strengthened within us, by Penance it is restored, by Holy Communion it is continually renewed by the Living Bread which cometh down and giveth life to the world (St. John vi. 33). But just as the food of the body needs not only to be received but assimilated, so grace received through the Sacraments needs to be assimilated and made operative in us by prayer, by which the substance of the Divine Life is made the substance of our life, transforming us into itself and enabling us to imitate the interior life of God by our growth in his likeness, our whole nature being unified and centred in him who is our Life.

SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is (Eph. v. 17). In speaking of the Will of God, two things are to be considered: first, that Will in itself; and, second, God's will for his creatures. That God possesses Will follows from the fact that he possesses Intellect, for in every intellectual being that which is perceived as good is desired and sought after by an act of the will. Thus in God, who perceives and loves his own Goodness, which is his Essence, there is Will which seeks that Goodness. And although his Will finds its perfect satisfaction and beatitude in his Goodness, yet as every being, *so far as it is perfect and in act, produces its like, so that it pertains to the nature of the will to communicate to others, as far as possible, the good it possesses, so it pertains to the Divine Will . . . to communicate by likeness its good to others, as much as is possible* (Summa Theol., I. xix. 2). Thus God wills things apart from himself, not by any necessity, but only for the sake of the end, which is his Goodness, *inasmuch as it befits the Divine goodness that other things should be partakers therein* (*ibid.*). God's Will, then, is free; *he worketh all things according to the counsel of his will* (Eph. i. 11). *We must hold that the Will of God is the cause of things: and that he acts by the Will, not by a necessity of his nature* (Summa Theol., I. xix. 4). *For thy pleasure all things are and were created* (Rev. iv. 11); *All things were created by him and for him* (Col. i. 16). For as we desire the perfection of that which we love for its own sake, God, who wills and loves his Essence for its own sake, desires its perfection, and since this cannot be increased or multiplied in itself, he wills that things should be created in all their diversity so that his goodness may both be manifested and that it may be multiplied in that its likeness is shared by many. So also he loves all things as being a participation in his goodness, which is the end for which he wills all things to exist.

His Will, then, for his creatures is that they should, each after their own manner, reproduce and exhibit and so give glory to the Infinite Goodness of their Creator. *That whatever is might be established for his glory* (Ecclus. xlii. 17); *Even everyone that is called by my Name: for I have created him for my glory* (Isa. xliii. 7). Thus the inanimate creation is *full of the goodness of the Lord* (Ps. xxxiii. 5), and gives glory to its Creator by fulfilling his will; *all these things live and remain for ever for all uses, and they are all obedient* (Ecclus. xlii. 23). All things in heaven and earth *stand in their order at the commandment of the Holy One* (Ecclus. xliii. 10). But for man, since he is a rational being, made in the image of God, his Will goes further—*This is the will of God, even your sanctification* (1 Thess. iv. 3). God wills for us a greater, more intimate union with himself than that in which all other creatures participate, a union not only of being but of will and love, by which we share in the innermost life of God. The Will of God, fulfilled instinctively by the lower creation, is to be freely chosen and willed by man, whom God has left free in order that his love and service might be that of a friend and lover rather than of a servant or slave. To do the will of God is man's highest privilege, the source of his liberty, his happiness, and his peace. *In his Will is our peace* (Paradiso III.). *For peace is the tranquillity of order* (De Civit Dei lxix. 13), that order which is disturbed by sin, and which is restored both within and, in measure, without the soul, when God's will is made the motive power of life. To set ourselves to pray, *Thy will be done*, and to carry out that prayer in our lives is to enter into that Divine Harmony which rules all things, despite all outward appearances; it is to keep ourselves in touch with the Eternal Conductor of the orchestra of created things and so to contribute to the perfection of the Divine work. No need to lament our littleness, our insignificance, our one talent. The perfect rendering of a Beethoven symphony depends upon each player doing his best, not merely upon the first violins, and the least known, least powerful, most obscure child of God who seeks to do his Will in all things contributes to the Divine glory that which would otherwise be lacking, and in fulfilling the end for which he was created multiplies the Divine Goodness, far beyond his seeing, in the earth. For when God's Will is done, his Kingdom comes.

PASSION SUNDAY

Power belongeth unto God (Ps. lxii. 11); *Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory* (St. Matt. vi. 13); *For so much then as thou art righteous thyself, thou orderest all things righteously . . . for thy power is the beginning of righteousness; and because thou art Lord of all it maketh thee to be gracious to all* (Wisd. xii. 15, 16). The power of God may be described as the Life of God in act, inasmuch as power implies the idea of a principle, putting into execution what the will commands and what knowledge directs, all of which three things are identical in God. We know of God's power by his works, *for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead* (Rom. i. 20); but this must not lead us to think that the power of God is only or chiefly active in creation, a kind of latent potentiality which creation called into being. For God is eternally and infinitely omnipotent; his power is one with his Essence and Existence, and is eternally active in the Adorable Life of the Most Holy Trinity. Moreover, as we shall see, creation is not the greatest act of his power. By saying that God is Almighty or Omnipotent we mean that he can do all that is possible to God, for there are some things which are not possible to him, because he is omnipotent. *Whatever implies contradiction does not come within the scope of Divine Omnipotence, because it cannot have the nature of possibility. Hence it is better to say that such things cannot be done, than that God cannot do them* (Summa Theol., I. xxv. 3). For instance, God cannot sin, for not only would this be a contradiction of his Nature, but to *sin is to fall short of a perfect action; hence the power to sin is the power to fall short in action, which is repugnant to Omnipotence* (*ibid.* 3). God cannot be increased *or diminished: unto him may nothing be added, neither can he be diminished* (Ecclus. xlii. 21). He cannot fail—*Thou art the same, thy years shall not fail* (Heb. i. 12). He cannot grow weary or forget—*Behold, he that keepeth*

Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep (Ps. cxxi. 4). He cannot be overcome, nor repent, nor be angry, nor sorrowful, since all these denote passion and defect. It is true that Holy Scripture uses such expressions of God, but these are not to be taken literally, in the sense that we use them of creatures, for no term belongs to God in the same sense that it does to creatures, but only metaphorically, as expressing the effect of such passions. Thus God is called a jealous God, meaning that he will not allow another to take his place in our hearts, not that he suffers jealousy as we do.

We have said that creation is not the greatest sign of God's power, for size and quantity are not measures of God. The greatest act of Divine Omnipotence is to be merciful—*Thou canst show forth thy great strength at all times when thou wilt: and who may withstand the power of thy hand? But thou hast mercy upon all, for thou canst do all things* (Wisd. xi. 21-23)—and the nearest sight we have of Divine Power is in Jesus Christ, *the power of God and the wisdom of God* (1 Cor. i. 24). In him we see *the omnipotent goodness of the Divine weakness* (Dion., Div. Nom. iii. 2), Omnipotence shown in forgiveness, in bestowing life, in leading men on to participation in an infinite good, which is the greatest effect of the Power of God. Infinite Wisdom and Power combine in the Passion, where Omnipotence stoops to conquer, and God most shows his Power in what it really consists, in Infinite Mercy, Tenderness, Patience, and Love. *But thou, mastering thy power, judgest with equity, and orderest us with great favour* (Wisd. xii. 18), and in thy Passion hast *shown us that the weakness of God is stronger than men* (1 Cor. i. 25).

The veiled courts of Passiontide are not dark to the lovers of God; their very gloom but throws into light the power of that Infinite Love, which so descends to earth's lowest depths in order that it may raise man from the dust and set him with the princes of his people (Ps. cxiii. 6, 7). The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth even more gloriously from the tree of the cross than from the height of heaven; it is before the crucifix that the nations of the earth pour forth their treasure and do homage such as no earthly sovereign has ever received. For here all the powers which have oppressed mankind are once for all defeated, so that from henceforth it is said, *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper* (Isa. liv. 17), since he who hangs upon the cross is he who has said, *Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world* (St. John xvi. 33), and to the weak and tempted, *My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness* (2 Cor. xii. 9). Passion of Christ, Power of God, strengthen me.

MONDAY IN PASSIONTIDE

For thou lovest all the things that are, and abhorrest nothing which thou hast made, for never wouldest thou have made anything if thou hadst hated it (Wisd. xi. 24). *God is Love* (1 St. John iv. 8); not merely God loves, but that he *is* Love, and that because he knows and loves himself in the infinite perfection of his own Goodness, so he knows and loves all that he has created, that in creatures his Divine perfections should be reflected and his glory shown forth. *He knew all things ere ever they were created* (Ecclus. xxiii. 20), and *Heaven and earth are full of his glory.* Love is the meaning of all that God is and does. *I saw that he is to us everything that is good and comfortable for us: he is our clothing that for love wrappeth us, claspeth us, and all-encloseth us for tender love* (Rev. of Divine Love, ch. v.). For he does not love all things equally, since he has not made all things equally capable of his love, but wills a greater good for man, his rational creature, than for things below man; for to love anything is to wish it good, and of all men he loves especially those who are members of his Only-Begotten Son, whom he loves more than he loves the whole created universe. *The better a thing is, the more it is like to God and is more loved of God* (Summa Theol., I. xx. 3-4), and to no one has he willed a greater good than to be united to his Son, to whom he has given a *Name which is above every name* (Phil. ii. 9), and of whom he has said, *This is my beloved Son* (St. Matt. iii. 17). Like calls unto like, and *we love God because he first loved us* (1 St. John iv. 19). *I have loved thee with an everlasting love* (Jer. xxxi. 3). Love of God is not a passion or sentiment of our lower nature, but an act of our will, choosing and preferring God above all things, a choice determined by God's love for us which draws us to him. God, says Dionysius, is called jealous *because he is vehement in his good yearning towards the world, and because he stirs up* *men to a zealous search of yearning desire for him* (Div. Nom. iv. 13). So love is also a giving, inspired by God's giving of himself to us, *Who loved me and gave himself for me* (Gal. ii. 20), and by his giving himself to us to be our very life—*The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world* (St. John vi. 51); give, not only upon the bitter cross in Sacrifice for the world, but give in the continual memorial of that Sacrifice, wherein *as the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me* (*ibid.* v. 57).

The Passion of God, extended through all time in the Mass, reveals to us the fulness of Divine Love—*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (St. John xv. 13); yet he has done more, for *God commendeth his love to us, in that whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Rom. v. 8). If, then, *when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life* (*ibid.* v. 10), by that Life which we receive as the words are spoken: "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life."

The measure of loving God is to love him without measure, as he loves us. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, etc.* (St. Luke x. 27). Our love is so often poor and mediocre because there is so little giving in it, because we hold so much back, are so afraid to give ourselves entirely to God. We will not suffer the love of God a full entry into our hearts; our meanness and selfishness keeps God on the threshold—*Behold I stand at the door and knock* (Apoc. iii. 20). The voice of our Divine Lover cries continually, *Give, and it shall be given you* (St. Luke vi. 38), for only in giving ourselves fully may we know the fulness of God's love, that love which filled until it broke his Sacred Heart that it might be poured forth into our hearts. *Behold this Heart which has so loved men.* Looking on him whom we have pierced, shall we not cry: "O Loving Heart of Jesus, my God, make me love thee who so lovest me"?

TUESDAY IN PASSIONTIDE

As his majesty is, so is his mercy (Wisd. ii. 18). For in God, *mercy and truth are met together* (Ps. lxxxv. 10); *all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth* (Ps. xxiv. 10).

Truth is here the same as Justice, for the justice of God establishes things in the order of Truth, which, says St. Augustine, *is that whereby is made manifest that which is.* Justice and Mercy, which to our minds are so opposed, are but two aspects of the same thing, the infinite Goodness of God. God is Just in giving to each thing what is due to it by nature and condition—*Thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight* (Wisd. xi. 20). *But the whole of Divine Justice always presupposes the work of Mercy; and is founded thereon* (Summa Theol., I. xxi. 4). For man's existence is not a necessity with God, but a free act of his

Omnipotent Love and Mercy. But having created us, God out of the abundance of his goodness bestows upon us what is due more bountifully than is strictly proportionate to our deserts. He gives liberally, *more than either we desire or deserve . . . giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask* (Collect: Trinity XII.). *For the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy* (St. Jas. v. 11), rich in mercy (Eph. ii. 4), merciful not only to those who are true of heart, but, *I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more* (Heb. viii. 12).

Justice does not mean punishment alone; it is equally shown in setting free or in pronouncing a person worthy of reward. Nor does the mercy of God contradict his justice, for to act mercifully is to do something more than to be just, as if a man should give fifty pounds when he need strictly only give five pounds, or who forgives when he might justly punish. Such acts of mercy do not make men unjust, they only enhance the goodness which is the source of both justice and mercy. And this which we praise in men is the plenitude of justice in God, *who giveth liberally to all men and upbraideth not* (St. Jas. i. 5), *and in whom Mercy exalteth itself above judgment* (St. Jas. ii. 13).

Mercy and Truth are met together, for Mercy acts upon the whole truth, not merely upon the law, but upon Love, which takes account of more than law. I am a sinner and deserve punishment, the sentence of Justice is justified. But if the misery of a fellow-man can move me to more than justice, how much more God, the Divine Lover of all that he has created? I have sinned, I do not deserve mercy. It is true, but God says, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy* (Rom. ix. 12), and, *His tender mercies are over all his works* (Ps. clxv. 9).

Yet the ultimate ground of God's mercy lies in something deeper than the fact of creation or of sin alone. It is rooted in the fact that God sees us, not as we are in ourselves, but as we are in Christ, members of his Mystical Body, made one with him by his Incarnation and Passion. In the eyes of the Eternal Father we are not merely prodigals but prodigal *sons,* sons of God by grace as Jesus is Son of God by nature, bearing that character of sonship conferred in our Baptism, which nothing can destroy. So we pray:

> " Look, Father, look on his anointed Face,
> And only look on us as found in him,"

for in him the infinite mercy of God is not only plainly manifested, but is poured forth upon us—*God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ* (Eph. ii. 4, 5).

Be ye therefore merciful, even as your Father also is merciful (St. Luke vi. 36). Passiontide is not given to us merely to evoke an emotion, but that we may put on the mind of Christ crucified, not only that we may look for mercy, but that we may extend it to others. To be of the Body of Christ is to be one through whom Christ works, one by whom the fruit of his Passion is conveyed to the world. And how shall we better do this than by exercising mercy, forgiveness, liberality, kindness, charity? Only, indeed, in bestowing mercy shall we receive it, and found our works, as all those of God are founded, in mercy and truth.

WEDNESDAY IN PASSIONTIDE

Thou, Father, governeth it by providence (Wisd. xiv. 3). There is scarcely any term more commonly used of God than that of Providence, yet used with so little idea of its true meaning. Providence does not simply mean that God cares for and provides for his creatures, but that he does so in view of the final end for which he has created them. For God does not work aimlessly but for a purpose. As the idea of every created thing exists eternally in the Divine Mind, so does its end and the manner by which it attains that end. Hence Boethius defines Providence as the *Divine Reason itself, seated in the Supreme Ruler, which disposeth all things.* Providence in God is what is called prudence in man, the ordering of things to an end. *The works of the Lord are done in judgment from the beginning: and from the time he made them he disposed the parts thereof* (Ecclus. xvi. 26); *All the works of the Lord are exceeding good, and whatsoever he commandeth shall be accomplished in due season* (*ibid.* xxxix. 16); *He worketh all things according to the counsel of his will* (Eph. i. 11). Now that will is that all things should, according to their capacity, share in the Divine Goodness, to which Goodness the Providence of God orders all things, both giving them all that is necessary and directing them toward that Goodness which is at once the Source from which all their good is derived and the End which draweth all things to itself. Nothing, then, is too small to escape the Divine Knowledge or to be outside the Divine Will. *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered* (St. Luke xii. 6, 7).

Yet over against this picture of order, of Divine Providence caring for all, ordering all towards its end, and that end the Divine Goodness, we see a world apparently given over to disorder, men's lives the butt of chance or idle fate, evil ever warring with and often overcoming the good. "If I were God," we cry, "I would not allow this or that." But not being God, but only creatures, we cannot see or know as God sees and knows; we cannot grasp the whole of the Divine Plan, and so we cannot know, with our limited outlook, how all things are being guided by God, who, as St. Augustine says, *would in no wise permit evil to exist in his works, unless he were so Almighty and so good as to produce good even from evil.* We cannot see or know how, for this would be to be as God, whose Wisdom is infinite and *whose ways are not our ways,* but we can believe that he is love and that *all things work together for good to them that love God.* To no lesser faith are we brought by the Passion of our Lord. Never did the Love and Providence of God seem less apparent than on that day when the sun hid itself from the evil done upon the earth, when all goodness and righteousness and truth seemed to have perished in that lonely Figure nailed to his cross. But those who had the courage to endure that darkness, to stand in the face of that evil, heard that last word which proclaimed an abiding confidence in the Providence of God: *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*

THURSDAY IN PASSIONTIDE

God is Perfect Happiness, Unbounded Joy, Infinite Delight. *That which constitutes the life of happiness is to be loved for its own sake* (St. Aug., Doc. Christ. i. 22). God knows and loves himself, he is Happiness in himself, does not become or acquire Happiness, but is himself his own Fulness, Joy, and Beatitude. Happiness, again, is *joy in the truth* (St. Aug., Conf. x. 23), since the whole truth of a thing is the complete comprehension of it, and God comprehends himself perfectly and joys in the entire possession of, or, rather, in being himself, Truth. He is Joy unbounded, being that Perfect Liberty which consists in the free and joyous self-expression of his Perfect Nature. He is Infinite Delight, for delight is a being at rest in something desired by the will, and *God is supremely at rest in himself, who is the principal Object of his Will, as finding all sufficiency in himself* (Summa Contra Gent. I. xc.).

As God is All in All to himself, so is he our All, our own Happiness, our Fulness of Joy, our Supreme

Delight, for *spiritual creatures receive no other interior aid to happiness than the eternity, truth, and charity of the Creator* (St. Aug., Gen. ad. Pit. viii. 25). *Behold, the joy that cometh unto thee from God* (Bar. iv. 36). God finds his happiness in himself, for his Being is his Happiness; but man cannot find happiness either in himself or in any creature, but only in the attainment and possession of God, who is man's last End and Perfect Good. *As for me, I will behold thy presence in righteousness: and when I awake up after thy likeness I shall be satisfied with it* (Ps. xvii. 15); *Thou shalt show me the path of life; in thy Presence is fulness of joy: and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore* (Ps. xvi. 12).

The perfection of our happiness, which consists in seeing God as he is, is only possible in heaven; but since it is a participation in the life of God, it begins here on earth in the knowledge, love, and service of God. *This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent* (St. John xvii. 3). For the Kingdom of God, of which we are inheritors, the treasures of which are already opened to us, is *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost* (Rom. xiv. 17). Joy is not merely an adjunct of the Christian life; it should be one of its most characteristic notes—*I will joy in the God of my salvation* (Hab. iii. 18); *Delight thou in the Lord, and he shall give thee thy heart's desire* (Ps. xxxvii. 4); *my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God* (Ps. lxxxiv. 2); *O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands; serve the Lord with gladness* (Ps. c. 1).

We suffer from the infection of Puritanism and Jansenism; our religion is too much occupied with sin and self; we live in an atmosphere of constant and seemingly unavailing struggle, of endeavours after self-improvement; we have fallen in love with our misery, our difficulties, our failures. It is all wrong and foolish, for not thus do we escape from self and sin and failure, but by delighting in God, by looking not inward but outward, lifting our eyes to the hills *from whence cometh our help* (Ps. xxi. 1). For *the joy of the Lord is your strength* (Neh. viii. 10), joy which comes, not from regard of self and our misery, but in the contemplation of and a free and loving service of God. *Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord* (St. Matt. xxv. 21).

It was on the eve of his Passion that our Lord promised his own joy to his Apostles—*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full* (St. John xv. 11)—for the Passion was the means by which God in Christ reconciled the world unto himself (2 Cor. v. 19), making possible that union with him of which our Lord had just spoken in the parable of the True Vine. Sorrow was to be there, as it was his and ours, but *your sorrow shall be turned into joy* (*ibid.* xvi. 20), since by that very sorrow joy was to come to the whole world. *Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning* (Ps. xxx. 5)—in that morning when our true Life comes again unto his own in the glory of his Easter triumph. *Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross* (Heb. xii. 2). He, who although he always shared in the Divine Beatitude, yet would take his place among the wayfarers, himself the Way as he is the Truth and the Life, that by his Way, way of the cross, way chosen, loved, followed, we might be brought to that Joy which is naught less than God himself, our Portion and our exceeding great Reward.

FRIDAY IN PASSIONTIDE

With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you. God is outside the entire order of the universe, and finds his whole Beatitude in the interior Life of the Most Holy Trinity, having no need of anything outside himself. For were this not so he would be less than that of which he had need, since a being can only find a greater perfection in that which is greater than itself. But there can be nothing greater or better than God, who is the Supreme Good and who must seek his glory in himself. Creation has no other end than the glory of God, and the Love which freely created seeks the good of his creation, not as an end in itself, but that it may attain its end. It is the quality of love to be diffusive, to communicate itself, to give itself to the beloved. *God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son* (St. John iii. 16); *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him* (1 St. John iv. 9). The glory of God is the living man, says St. Iranæus, and the living man is the man who lives *in Christ,* as Christ lives for the glory of the Eternal Father. *I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do* (St. John xvii. 4).

All throughout Holy Scripture God reveals himself as the God of desire, who longs to dwell in his children, to be with them, and to be their God. It is this Eternal Desire which has *loved us with an everlasting love* (Jer. xxxi. 3), *has chosen us before the foundation of the world* (Eph. i. 4), desiring to eat the new Passover of our redemption and sanctification with us that we might be one in him and he in us; that is the meaning of the Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection, of the Church and the Sacraments, through which the Mysteries of the Word made Flesh are perpetuated among and conveyed to us, all means which God hath devised *that his banished be not expelled from him for ever* (2 Sam. xiv. 14). The Eternal Lover has drawn us to himself *with cords of a man, with bands of love* (Hos. xi. 4), has initiated us into that passion of love which, burning within the bosom of the Godhead, was kindled upon earth that its ardour might consume the children of men. So we are not surprised to find that the more human hearts are set on fire with heavenly desire, so the more they are immersed in the Passion. It must be so, for the soul who is drawn into the innermost shrine of the Divine Life sees there, in the midst of the throne, *a Lamb standing as it had been slain* (Rev. v. 6), that Lamb of God by whom all things are reconciled to and made one with God, and, seeing, desires *to fill up that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake* (Col. i. 24). *There stood by the cross* *of Jesus his mother* (St. John xix. 25). Most humble of all creatures, so most regarded by the Creator, Mary was most conformed to the Divine Will, her immaculate Heart all at one with the Heart of her Son. So she must be not only Mother of God but also Mother of Sorrows; the sword of her Seven Dolours must pierce her Heart that, first of lovers, she might be the Mother and Guide of all the lovers of Jesus, who, by the very force of love, are called to drink of his cup, to bear their part in his Passion, to stand by his cross, not only to share in its merits, but to be living mediators of the Divine Love to the world. Co-redemptrix, Reparatrix, Mediatrix of all graces in a unique and singular manner by her vocation of Mother of God, Mary, through whom Jesus came to us and through whom, as St. Bernard says, God has willed to give all graces, is the model of all those who by their union with Jesus are called to be *workers together with him* (2 Cor. vi. 1), and this, most of all, by their union with his Passion, since it was this alone which redeemed the world, by *bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our body* (2 Cor. iv. 10).

SATURDAY IN PASSIONTIDE

Behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and to-morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go to thy home (Judg. xix. 9).

God is the Eternal Home of our souls, that Home to which St. Augustine so beautifully says: *Let us now, O Lord, return, that we may not be overturned, because with thee our good lives without any decay, which good is thyself; nor need we fear, lest there be no place to receive us on our return, because we fell from it; for in our absence, our home fell not—which is thy eternity* (Conf. iv. 16).

We are yet *pilgrims and strangers* (Heb. xi. 13), who, like exiles in a far land, can find no real happiness or rest in the things by which we are surrounded. No wonder, since we were not made for these things, the best of which fail and disappoint us, but for God. *Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee* (St. Aug., Conf. i. 1). But we are more than pilgrims, we are prodigals in whom the memory of the Home we left cannot be obliterated. As we wander in the far country the thought of God our Father and our Home will not be denied, until at last we turn from the empty husks of earth and set our face toward the Home we left, the *rest that remaineth for the people of God* (Heb. iv. 9). And our God, knowing our weakness and the dangers of the way, not only calls us to return to him, but sends his Son to meet us and bring us on our way. Jesus, who daily says to us, *Lodge here, that thine heart may be merry,* lodge here in the daily contemplation of the goodness, the greatness, the beauty, the adorable attributes of God, gaining from the Fountain of Eternal Life the light and grace which shall be your rest, your joy, and your strength, that so to-morrow you may get you early on your way to God your Home. Day by day during this Lent we have been contemplating the high mysteries of the Being of God, from whom we came, to whom we go, and we shall do well to centre our lives more and more in such loving attention to him as the days go by. Nothing will more rid us of that preoccupation with self, which is the death of all true religion; only in seeking God do our souls live. *We should hunger not for the knowledge of things to avoid, but for the revelation of things to love* (Von Hügel). *It is the appreciation of good rather than the dread of evil which makes a soul advance towards perfection* (Mother Stuart). The thought of heaven has not that power with us that it had with the Saints of old, because we have so forgotten that what makes heaven is the seen, known, and enjoyed possession of God himself. And the beginning of that which is to be our eternal happiness is given to us now, as we become conscious of the fact that we have been made *fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God* (Eph. ii. 19), so that even in this our pilgrimage by daily prayer and contemplation of God our lives are lifted above the narrow valleys of earth and we are enabled to endure *as seeing him who is invisible* (Heb. xi. 27). *The Lord is my strength and my song* (Exod. xv. 2). There is no life which is not at times hard or dull or beset by temptation, and little do our efforts ease such moments. To *delight in the Lord,* to live in the Eternity which is our Home, in the Light in which we may see light, *this is to taste and see that the Lord is gracious,* to know in time the life which is eternal.

PALM SUNDAY

As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father (St. John x. 15). Our Lord, as Man, possessed in his human soul the most perfect knowledge of God, for the rational creature is capable of that knowledge, being made in the image of God, and is brought to that knowledge by the Sacred Humanity. *None knoweth the Son save the Father; neither knoweth any the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son shall be pleased to reveal him* (St. Matt. xi. 27).

Thus eternal life consists in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, whom he has sent, and that knowledge, which is the unique possession and joy of Jesus, he most plainly reveals in his Passion. So St. Paul desires no other knowledge than that of Jesus Crucified, and St. Thomas Aquinas, when asked whence he had obtained his great knowledge of Divine things, replied, pointing to his crucifix: "In that book I have learnt more than in any other." For, as he had written, *Every created intellect knows in the Word so many more things the more perfectly it sees the Word* (Summa Theol., III. I. x. 2). In the Passion there is the fullest revelation of God—all God, as it were, gathered to a point, *for us men and for our salvation*. There all the Divine Attributes, One in the Magnificent Perfection of the Adorable Simplicity of Eternal and Omnipotent Being, who is Infinite Goodness, Supreme Wisdom and Sanctity, Unfailing Justice and Mercy, Unchangeable Life and Love, are manifested in that Act in which God is most perfectly God, Man most perfectly man, and heaven and earth most perfectly one. On Calvary the full fruits of the Divine Life and Knowledge in man are seen in our Crucified God, there is made known what that Life and Knowledge are designed to communicate to and produce in our souls. *The Cross is the Key, the Door, the Way, and the splendour of the Truth,* says St. Bonaventura. It is the Tree of Life, *planted by the waterside, that will bring forth its fruit in due season* (Ps. i. 3), in him who exercises himself day and night in its law.

The first fruit of the knowledge of God revealed in the Passion is humility. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God thought it not a thing to be grasped at to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbleth himself, and became obedient even unto death, even the death of the cross* (Phil. ii. 5, 8). Note well the positive nature of his humility—*He made himself of no reputation, he humbleth himself,* not merely was made or was humbled by another, but chose by a deliberate act of his will to be *humble and meek of Heart* (St. Matt. xi. 29). Christian humility is nothing else but the humility of Christ in us, since our Lord *communicates his own virtues to his members who are docile to his influence* (St. John Eudes), and consists not merely in being put in the lowest place but in choosing the lowest place (St. Luke xiv. 10). Humility is truth, and the recognition of the truth about ourselves comes, not from looking at ourselves, but *in thy light shall we see light;* not, as Fr. Augustine Baker says, *in considering thine own self, thy sinfulness and misery, but rather in a quiet, loving sight of the Infinite Endless Being and Goodness of Jesus* (Holy Wisdom I. vi. 5). Our Lord did not become humble on the cross, but in making himself of no reputation, in taking the form of a servant, in fashioning himself as a man, as one of the crowd, *learning obedience by the things which he suffered* (Heb. v. 8) from the first moments of his Incarnate Life in Mary's womb. *Leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps* (1 St. Pet. ii. 21), and this in due order, beginning with humility, which is the foundation of the spiritual life, without which it will but be built on sand. Too often we try and run before we have learnt to walk, to mount the cross before we have descended into ourselves by humility—the knowledge of the nothingness of self. *Then I sought a way of obtaining strength, sufficient to enjoy thee: and found it not, until I embrace that Mediator betwixt God and man, the man Christ Jesus. . . . For thy Word, the Eternal Truth, far above the higher part of thy creation, raises up unto itself those subject to it; but in this lower world built for itself an habitation of our clay, whereby to abase from themselves such as would be subject to him, and bring them over to himself; allaying the swelling of their pride and fomenting their love, to the end they might go no further in self-confidence, but rather consent to become weak, seeing before them the Divinity weak by taking our coats of skin; and* *wearied, might cast themselves down upon him, so that he rising might lift them up* (St. Aug., Conf. viii. 18).

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK

For he is our peace (Eph. ii. 14). The human Soul of our Lord was ever filled with that *peace of God which passeth understanding* (Phil. iv. 7), peace which resulted from the entire union of his human will with the Divine Will. Subject to all the conditions of our humanity, beset by fierce temptations, thronged by the crowds who pressed around him, at everyone's beck and call so that he had not even time to eat, and had only his nights to give to prayer, assailed by those who wanted to betray him into some word they could lay hold of against him, and, finally, immersed in all the crude shame and tumult, pain and horror of his Passion, always he moves in a serene atmosphere born of that interior peace which was his and which he came to bestow upon us. Peace is the gift of his Passion, for by it he made peace between God and man (Eph. ii. 14-15), provides the means of peace by which we are freed from sin and united to the God of Peace. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you* (St. John xiv. 27), peace which comes from the knowledge of him and his Will—*These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace* (St. John xvi. 33); *Great peace have they which love thy law* (Ps. cxix. 165). The peace of God will rule in our hearts in the degree that we give ourselves lovingly and generously to his Will. *In his will is our peace,* for *peace is the tranquillity of order* (St. Aug., De Civit. Dei lxix. 13), and is found when our lives are anchored in the will of God, all our faculties and powers directed into the doing of his Will. *The fruit of righteousness is peace* (St. Jas. iii. 18). It will grow in us as we detach ourselves from those manifold desires which so distract and disturb our lives, as we are deepened in humility, and as our prayer becomes more and more an habitual attitude of the soul towards God. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee* (Isa. xxxvi. 3). Try as we will we cannot create that peace within which we so desire and which is one of the first conditions of the soul's growth. It may only be gained by the contemplation and imitation of the interior life of the God of Peace, *from whom is peace over all the earth* (Ecclus. xxxviii. 8). Such was the peace of the Sacred Heart, which all through the Passion rested in the will of the Eternal Father, on whom his mind was ever stayed and in whom he, when his work was finished, laid himself down in peace, saying: *Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit.*

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

The God of Patience (Rom. xv. 5). *God is patient,* says St. Augustine, *because he is Eternal,* and only in the school of his Eternity may we children of impatience learn this most necessary virtue of the spiritual life. And the lessons of that school are written out for us in the outstretched arms of the Crucified, the Word of his patience (Rev. iii. 10), to be read and kept in our hearts. *We walk by faith, not by sight* (2 Cor. v. 7), *for the vision is yet for the appointed time, but at the last it shall speak, and lie not: though it tarry, wait for it* (Hab. ii. 3), and it is just this *trial of faith which worketh patience. Let then patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing* (St. Jas. i. 3-4).

How small and mean our impatience looks as we kneel before the crucifix and contemplate the infinite patience of our God, born of his eternal love for his children! *The number of a man's days at the most are a hundred years. As a drop of water into the sea, and a gravelstone in comparison of the sand: so are a thousand years to the days of eternity. Therefore is God patient with them, and poured forth his mercy upon them* (Ecclus. xviii. 9-11). What else but Eternal Love would have dealt with us as he has?

We are told that our Lord *learned obedience by the things which he suffered* (Heb. v. 5), and may we not say that so, too, he learned patience? For patience is defined by St. Augustine as the virtue by which we endure evils with equanimity, or, as says St. Thomas, without giving way to sadness, and the life of our Divine Master was one long endurance of evil, a constant meeting of just those very things which provoke impatience in us. At Nazareth he was subject to the narrow limitations of seclusion and poverty, during the public ministry to the more trying barriers of ignorance, of unbelief, of slander, and misunderstanding, to the continual temptation to gain his end by the impatient ways of men rather than by the slow and hidden ways of God. Not only for three hours but all his life he hung upon the cross of his Father's will, whilst men cried, *Come down, and we will believe in thee,* and mocked him for his seeming impotence. *By patience,* says St. Benedict, *we share in the Passion of Christ,* and he is not thinking of the high patience of the Saints, who in extraordinary sufferings and martyrdom bore in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus, but of the common round of life, which is *a little school of the Lord's service* for us all, and in which no lesson needs more learning or will bear more fruit than that St. Peter teaches us: *What glory is it, if, when ye are buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps* (1 St. Pet. ii. 20, 21).

Little as we are, it is by little things we rise or fall, by little things we share in the Passion of Jesus, who, regarding our lowliness and having compassion on our weakness, takes and unites to his own Divine Patience every little act by which we possess our souls in him.

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will be silent in his love (Zeph. iii. 17).

> "Seven times he spoke, seven words of love:
> And all three hours his silence cried
> For mercy on the souls of men."

The Lord is in his temple, let all the earth keep silence before him (Hab. ii. 20), even in that temple of his glory, where *in the midst of the throne stands a Lamb as it has been slain* (Rev. v. 6), the Lamb of God, who *was oppressed and afflicted, yet opened not his mouth: and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth* (Isa. liii. 7), *but is silent in his love.*

The silence of the heart and of the lips is a fruit of the knowledge of God, in whose Presence our words seem but a profanation of the unutterable harmonious silence which guards inviolate the courts of Heaven's high Majesty. Our early approaches to God are full of words; it is only as we grow in knowledge that we learn that we are not heard for our much speaking (St. Matt. vi. 7), and the even greater lesson that only in silence may we hear the word of God. For as St. John of the Cross says: *The Father uttered one Word: that Word is his Son, and he utters him for ever in an eternal silence, and in silence must the soul hear. That which we most require for our spiritual growth is the silence of the desire and of the tongue before God who is so* *high: the language he most listens to is that of silent love.*

Silence is one of the characteristics of God; all his works without himself are marked by the absence of noise, of haste, and so of all the confusion and loss of power which comes from these things. He wills that his Word should redeem the world, yet not by words but by hanging silently upon a cross. The creative, saving, sanctifying Word of God is born in silence, dwells in silence, works in silence; the Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection are all permeated with the silence of the Eternal. And if the proclaiming of that word demands the words and actions of men, these are fruitful only as they proceed from the silence of contemplation, which, as the highest act of man, brings him nearest to God. *Not lips but love, not voices but vows, echo in the ears of God,* and from these all our words and acts derive their power.

The silence of God is no arid desert, but the most intense activity of his love producing his Word, the Eternal Son, and, in the mutual love of the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit, in whom the circle of the Divine Life is complete. The silence of the Divine Word in his Passion is no proud Stoic indifference, but the fruitful bearing of the intensest suffering of love in which is born the new creation of the Body of Christ. The silence of the Saints is no mere abstention from speech, but the concentration of the whole being upon God, the shutting out of all that would hinder their absorption in the Divine Activity, which, gazing upon and dwelling in, they share and transmit to others. *For growth in* *virtue, the important thing is to be silent and work: conversation distracts, silence and work bring recollection* (St. John of the Cross, Maxim 296). *Silence is the nutriment of devotion* (À Kempis).

THURSDAY IN HOLY WEEK

Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you (St. Luke xxii. 19). No act of God so completes our knowledge of him as this, for all knowledge is barren which does not lead to love communicated in union with the Beloved. Here, knowledge is indeed life eternal, since it is the Truth who speaks and gives the Living Bread of his own Body for our food. Here the whole purpose of God is manifested in word and deed, the bringing of man into union with himself, *that they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us* (St. John xvii. 21), is both shown forth and accomplished in this Sacrament of Unity, by which we become one with God, through Jesus Christ, whose Sacred Humanity united to the Essential Godhead is here received that we may become one bread, one Body in him. Union, holiness, sanctity in the Truth—all this is here made plain, all is here given. *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth* (St. John xvii. 17); *For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth* (*ibid.* v. 19). By his Incarnation the Eternal Truth sanctified all human nature; *in* *the long garment was the whole world* (Wisd. xviii. 24); *when the Word was made Flesh,* says St. Augustine, *he sanctified himself in himself; himself the Man, in himself the Word, because the Word and the Man is one Christ. But he says it for the sake of his members; and for these I sanctify myself, that is, them in me, because in me they are even myself.* Sanctify them in me, who am *the Way, the Truth, and the Life,* by making them partakers of my truth, my holiness, my goodness. For in this Most Holy Sacrament Christ our Lord bestows upon us the glory of his Sonship, establishing in us by grace what he is by nature. *The glory thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one* (St. John xvii. 22).

The Divine Love, teaches Dionysius, revolves in a circle, proceeding from the Father to the Son and returning through the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son. Widened by the act of Creation to include all creatures, the Love of God narrows itself in the Incarnation of the Word only that it may further extend itself to the creature united to the Word in the Holy Eucharist. So the Divine Loving-Kindness, *the great attractive Power which unites things which are sundered, being, as it is, the Godhead and the Supreme Fount and Producer of Unity* (Divin. Nom. iv. 4), is bestowed upon us in Communion, not only that we may be caught up into that Unity of Love, but that in and through us it may be diffused in the world. *That they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me* (St. John xvii. 23). By the Sacrament of Love we are made apostles, instruments, channels of the Love of God, receiving Love himself that we may became lovers, each one a living link in the circle which binds men to God, their Beginning and their End.

GOOD FRIDAY

For their sakes I sanctify myself by offering myself in that Holy Sacrifice as the Divine Victim, by whom all things are reconciled unto God. *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself* (2 Cor. v. 19). On Calvary is accomplished once for all that which is to be accomplished in each member of the Mystical Body, of which Christ is the Head, for *whatever is done in our Head is a type of what we ought to do* (Summa Theol., I. i. 3). The Sacrifice of the Cross is not merely an act external to ourselves, something done *for* us, but something to be done in us and by us, for, as St. Augustine says, Head and Body are one Christ, and in him each Christian, living by his Life, is at once priest and Victim, altar and sacrifice. *He hath made us kings and priests unto God* (Rev. i. 6), *an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ* (1 St. Pet. ii. 5), mediators between God and man in virtue of our union with the *One Mediator, who touched the heaven but stood upon the earth, the blameless Man*, who, in his Passion, *made haste, and stood forth to defend them, bringing the shield of his proper ministry, even prayer, and the propitiation of incense, set himself against* *the wrath, and so brought the calamity to an end, declaring that he was thy servant* (Wisd. xviii. 16-21).

Made one in the Body of Christ, we offer the Sacrifice of that Body in the Mass, placing ourselves upon the paten with the Sacred Host of our redemption, that as the bread is changed into the Body of Christ so we may be transformed into his likeness, made living sacrifices, as the Apostle prays: *I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service* (Rom. xii. 1). In union with our great High Priest we say: *This is my body,* my whole self, which here I offer in sacrifice to God.

Who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal. ii. 20). The sweet melody of that truth fills all my heart to-day as I kneel before the crucifix. But there is great need that I see that it does not dissipate itself in mere emotion, in surface feelings, which, passing with this day, leave me even less Christian than I was before. For why did he love me and give himself for me but that I might love him and give myself to him? And why was Christ crucified but that I might be *crucified with Christ,* dying to self, in him and with him that I might live by him? Sacrifice is the very law of that life, the giving of self to God is the one condition of his giving himself to us. *Give, and it shall be given unto you.* How many Good Fridays have passed and yet the one lesson is still unlearnt, still *part of the price* is held back, and the offering I make is but a giving of the least that very shame forces from me! *Ye brought that which was torn, and the lame and the sick; thus* *ye brought an offering: should I accept this at your hand? saith the Lord* (Mal. i. 12).

Generosity of the Heart of Jesus, fill my heart this day. Blood of Christ, inebriate me, that I may compassionate thee in very truth, being made one with thy Passion, my life surrendered to the claim of Love Crucified, that, so a living victim, I may be offered upon the altar of love, sanctified, hallowed, consecrated by thee and for thee, that in thee I may sanctify myself for their sakes, for thy brethren, for those who know thee not, those who see thee not on thy cross, do not look for thee upon thine altar, but who think to see thee, look for thee in me, called by thy Name. *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body* (2 Cor. iv. 10).

What else does Good Friday mean?

HOLY SATURDAY

Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison (1 St. Pet. iii. 18, 19).

That he might bring us to God. It is the whole meaning of the Passion, of all that our Lord was and did; our return to God can only be by him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, who dies that we might live, not simply have the forgiveness of sin. And in these few hours in which the Body of the Lord lies in its chosen resting-place his Soul, for ever, as was his Body, united to the Divine Word, penetrates to all the lower world of spirits yet exiled from the immediate presence of God, not, as St. Thomas says, *by passing through them locally with his soul, but by spreading the effect of his power in a measure to them all* (Summa Theol., III. ii. 52, 2), that all mankind might share the benefits of his Passion and rise with him to newness of life. For, *I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly* (St. John x. 10).

Our return to God has for its motive force the fact that he is God, and all the way of our return needs to be dominated by that fact. To seek him for lesser reasons is not to seek him at all; it is to treat him as a means for our own ends, be they never so high and good. And only when we so seek him, only when his glory becomes the one *raison d'être* of our life as it was of our Lord's, so that we are content to freely give ourselves to his will up to the point of seeming barrenness of all result, content to face the bitter failure of the cross, does all our seeking bear its fruit. Constantly we ignore this truth, making our own salvation and sanctification, or that of others, the object of our seeking after God. But only when we seek God for his own sake shall we, *quickened by the Spirit,* be enabled, in one way or another, to *preach to the* spirits in prison, to minister out of our fulness to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. All our activity, whether of an ordinary Christian life in the duties of our state or of some special vocation or work for others, must and can only be fruit of that contemplation of God by which the Divine Life and Goodness purifies, enlightens, and fills our lives, and, filling them, overflows in the world. *An instant of pure love is more precious to God and more profitable to the Church than all other good works put together,* says St. John of the Cross, for such an instant unites us to God himself, making of us capacities to receive his love, channels through which that love may flow.

Lent ends, Christ rises in all the power of an endless Life—Life in which we are to share, Life given to us to be communicated to others. But our return to God ends not until we see his Face in the Beatific Vision, the lineaments of whose unfolded glory we have faintly endeavoured to discern in the weeks that have past. Past our Lent, but never the desire which God has implanted in our hearts, that we may *see the King in his Beauty*, desire which shall grow with every hour in which our mind raises itself to him in worship, contemplation, and prayer that we may know him more clearly, love him more dearly, and serve him more nearly, the knowledge of whom is eternal life, the love of whom is the soul's delight, the service of whom is the perfect freedom of the children of God.

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